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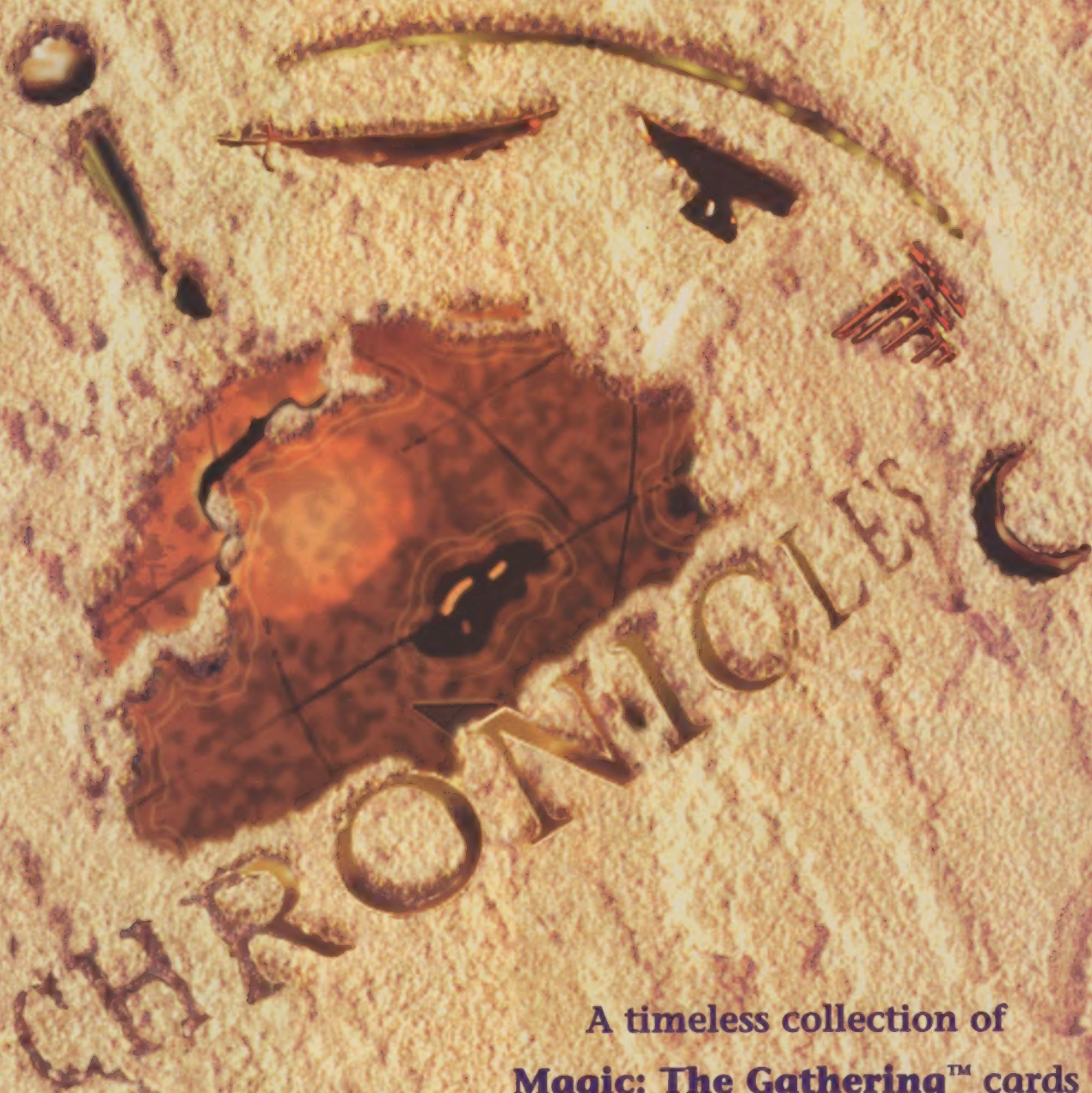
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ROCKIN' RIDDLER: Jim Carrey boogies with the Batmobile in this month's *Batman Forever*

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Little did I know that Batman would become such an icon," says Bob Kane, who was all of 18 when he first rendered the character in a six-page strip for *Detective Comics* in 1939. "Now it's a cottage industry."

Having seen Batman and his cadre of cohorts and criminal opponents through countless incarnations—including umpteen comic books, a couple of bargain-basement 1940s serials, the Adam West-Bruce Ward TV series of the late '60s and, more recently, Tim Burton's two features—Kane can't help but be staggered by the worldwide, multi-media force Bruce Wayne has become. And with more than \$700 million in international grosses from its high-flying film franchise, Warner Bros. is betting that Joel Schumacher's *Batman Forever*—covered from the set this issue by West Coast editor Dean Lamanna (see page 22)—is poised to make the Bat phenomenon soar higher still.

Perhaps because of its heroic profitability, Kane's enduring creation—from West's cheesy good samaritan to Michael Keaton's doleful Dark Knight and now Val Kilmer's colorful Caped Crusader—is constantly being reinvented for new screen audiences. So CINESCAPE asked the character's 73-year-old creator to review the biggest Bat film and TV projects of recent years.

BATMAN (1989)

"The movie's sets and Jack Nicholson's performance [as the Joker] made it a masterpiece. I was really happy with its dark, brooding quality, which I preferred to the campy television series of the '60s—though I liked that show very much. After nine years [of development and false starts], it was very gratifying to finally see it

come to the screen—and so well—with Tim Burton's marvelous vision."

BATMAN RETURNS (1992)

"It was good but not comparable to *Batman*. The storyline was a repetition of the first movie's. And Danny DeVito, as the Penguin, was a little too gross—with his belly and his behind sticking out, and his drooling. The movie did well [commercially], but we got flack from parents, which kept a lot of kids away. Aside from Danny, it's just flatter and didn't have the pizzazz of the first."

BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES

"The show [which debuted in 1992] is very nouveau art—very modern and stylized [in its use of] light, shadow and dimension. It's terrific; we won two Emmys. The animated feature that came from it, *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* [1993], didn't make much of a splash, but it was very good. I prefer these two projects to all the other animated efforts."

BATMAN FOREVER (1995)

"The script and Joel Schumacher's direction are lighthearted and humorous and dramatic; I can find nothing negative to say. Michael Keaton did very well as Batman, but Val Kilmer is really terrific—all of the actors are just fantastic. It's got a great look, and a great title, too, because it now seems like Batman will be around forever."

Whether it's sober analysis from a seasoned industry veteran or shameless boosterism from a proud creator, Kane's enthusiasm for the latest Bat-epic is based on an impressive track record.

—Douglas Perry
Managing Editor



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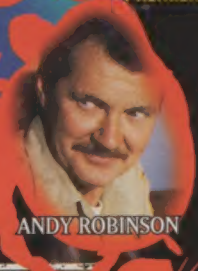
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Jurassic Lark

In the laserdisc article ("Kaboom!" April 1995), there was a write-up on the movie *Jurassic Park*, in which the author states, "Keep your eye on the shaving cream, better known as sequel-in-a-can." I don't think the screenwriters would use the shaving cream can as the basis for a sequel, because the first movie left more plausible openings in the plot that could be used instead.

First, the buildings, computers, labs and animals were still there when the movie ended, so the need for the embryos would not be there, especially considering the animals can breed in the wild now. Second, the shaving cream can contained only enough coolant for 36 hours and the can is buried in the mud. The coolant would have run out before anyone found it and the embryos would be dead. Besides, no one knew about the can, so why would anyone look for it?

If they were planning a sequel, I feel that the original movie should have followed Michael Crichton's book more closely, with dinosaurs escaping to the mainland.

HEATHER GOERNER
KELOWNA, BC

world; also, *Stargate* has great surround sound, especially when Kurt and Co. enter the *Stargate* itself.

DERRICK A. SWISTAK

Although I really like your magazine, your recent article on laserdiscs is full of flaws. You must be very careful what you label "widescreen" or "letterbox." For example, *Total Recall* was not shot in widescreen, and it is matted. This reissue may sound a little better than the first issue but a lot of top and bottom information has been cut off. In *Jurassic Park*, the live action was shot in 1:33 and the special effects were shot in 1:85. All of the Cameron movies listed were shot in Super 35mm, not wide, and all letterbox versions of his movies are matted. In fact, he supervised the "pan and scan" versions himself.

And how could you review a laserdisc not even released yet—*Robocop*?

PAUL RICH
VALLEY STREAM, NY

Marc Camron, author of "Kaboom!," responds: The term "widescreen" can be confusing. For the purposes of home theater, widescreen has come to mean anything wider than 1.33:1, the aspect ratio of television. The only true widescreen films are flat 70mm and scope (anamorphic) 35mm. These carry aspect ratios of 2.05:1 and 2.35:1, respectively. Academy Flat Standard 35mm film, however, has a frame size of 1.33:1, which is matted to 1.85:1. Super 35 is a variable process with a frame size of 1.66:1, yielding a final picture ranging from 1.85:1 to 2.35:1. The matting or cropping that takes place in this process should not be looked at as a negative process. Filmmakers shooting with standard 35mm and Super 35 routinely compose their shots to conform to the matted 1.85:1 to 2.35:1 standards. (This is not the same thing as the panning and scanning that is typically

presented in the 1.85:1 ratio. You are correct that all of the Cameron films were shot in Super 35, but again, all of the laserdisc transfers retain the original theatrical ratios. And *Robocop*: I recommended it after viewing advance material. The movie is being duplicated at press time and is set for a May release.

I was under the impression that laserdiscs were the only home format encoded with Dolby Stereo Digital AC-3. However, I purchased *Speed* on videocassette recently and the back cover of the cassette box has the Dolby symbol with these words printed underneath: "Spectral recording—Dolby stereo digital." Is the videocassette of *Speed* really encoded with digital surround sound, or is this just a misprint?

JONATHAN CHRISTIE
LONGMEADOW, MA

Big Kaboom

I wanted to comment on your excellent article on the best laserdiscs to hear and watch. I was intrigued by your choices for the best bang for your buck. There are a few movies that I think also could have been included, like *Top Gun*—this movie has some of the best demo sound in the

done when a film is transferred to video.) A good widescreen presentation retains the original theatrical aspect ratio of the film, preserving the look and feel the director originally gave the film.

As for your examples: *Total Recall* and *Jurassic Park* were

Marc Camron replies: At this time, there is no way to put an AC-3 digital bitstream on a VHS videotape. The markings on the back of the *Speed* tape refer to the mastering of the tape, not its playback capability.

Bab 5 defense

In the April issue, Louisa Mockler of Sydney, Australia, shoots back at J. Michael Straczynski's criticisms of TNG's Cmdr. Riker ("Letters," April 1995). Ms. Mockler, please don't take his observations of Riker so personally.

Neither *TNG* nor *B-5* is above criticism, though I love both shows. A show does not need to be perfect to be loved. Not every criticism is an attack—Straczynski was merely explaining how he would avoid certain problems of sci-fi television in *B-5*. He wasn't saying we should hate *Next Generation*.

I noticed Ms. Mockler's only criticism of *B-5* (a comment by one of the characters about "frictionless sheets") came from *B-5*'s pilot. Is this about all you have seen of the show? If so, you are missing out on some wonderful episodes. The second season is especially good. Perhaps it has yet to arrive in Australia. Watch for it; you may find that you will grow to love both shows, like myself.

MARK SULKOWSKI
BUFFALO, NY

Back on Trek

While I don't want to turn your letters column into a *Star Trek* forum, I have come up with three basic ideas that I believe can solve every problem with the *Star Trek* universe.

1) In addition to long-running series, I believe Paramount should consider different formats, including 2-hour specials or miniseries. This alleviates the problem of story premises that have a hard time remaining interesting year after year. This also allows for a greater expansion of the *Trek* universe and gives the viewers a chance to see some of the stories that don't pertain to the current series.

2) Publish the scripts for upcoming episodes in comic-book format before shooting. That would give fans a chance to criticize the stories before they are shot.

3) Stop using time-travel and alternate-universe story plots. Far too often, these are used as crutches for weak stories or quick excuses for plot twists. The classic dilemma of man vs. himself does not mean that every character must have

an evil doppelganger. Time travel also seems more often than not a silly excuse to use a spare set on the Paramount back lot. The strength of *Star Trek* has always been in its characters. Why does it seem that the exploration of these characters have to be secondary to some overused plot device?

CHRIS GENNARO
EAST BRUNSWICK, NJ

In response to the letter written by Darren Simmons (April 1995), who had criticisms about *DS9*, I'd like to say: First of all, the station doesn't have to go anywhere—the galaxy comes to *DS9*. Besides, they have the runabouts and the Defiant, as well as the wormhole. What more do you want? Thrusters on the station? Personally, I think it's a challenge to come up with fresh ideas for stories set on a station that is fixed in one location.

As for Sisko, I think Avery Brooks plays his character to its fullest potential. Monotonous? I don't think so. He has an appreciation for art, baseball, diplomacy and alien cultures. I even like his son because he is relatively normal, having gotten in some trouble, having a friend his father didn't approve of until recently, and having even dated a Dabo girl. He is intelligent, but he's not an ultra-smart whiz kid like Wesley "I'll save the day even though I'm just a kid and the rest of you have spent years in Starfleet" Crusher.

As for Jadzia Dax, she is an alien species, and the joining of the Trill and the so-called parasite is part of their culture. And I might add that the joining is purely voluntary. Besides, the "parasites" possess great knowledge, and they're not really "parasites," they're symbionts.

As for Quark, Odo, O'Brien, Kira and Bashir, I like them all, and I think Gene Roddenberry would be proud. If you don't like the stories, get out of OPS.

ERIK JORAMO
GREAT FALLS, MT

Maiden Voyager

In articles, interviews and letters alike, we are bombarded with the notion that the science-fiction/adventure genre is the sole property of the young single male. If a female happens to be interested, it is because she is tagging along behind her "significant male other."

Well, I am neither young, single nor male, but I would challenge any member of the testosterone-driven, demographically correct audience to prove their devotion and enthusiasm for the genre to be greater than my own. Almost 30 years ago, I put down the last of the Walter Farley horse books, picked up Andre Norton's *Star Rangers*, and I've never looked back. I don't care if the story is about men, women or aliens. I can take my adventure straight up or spiced with a little romance and humor. As long as it is intelligent, well written or acted and is a ripping good yarn, you'll have my full attention, not to mention my money.

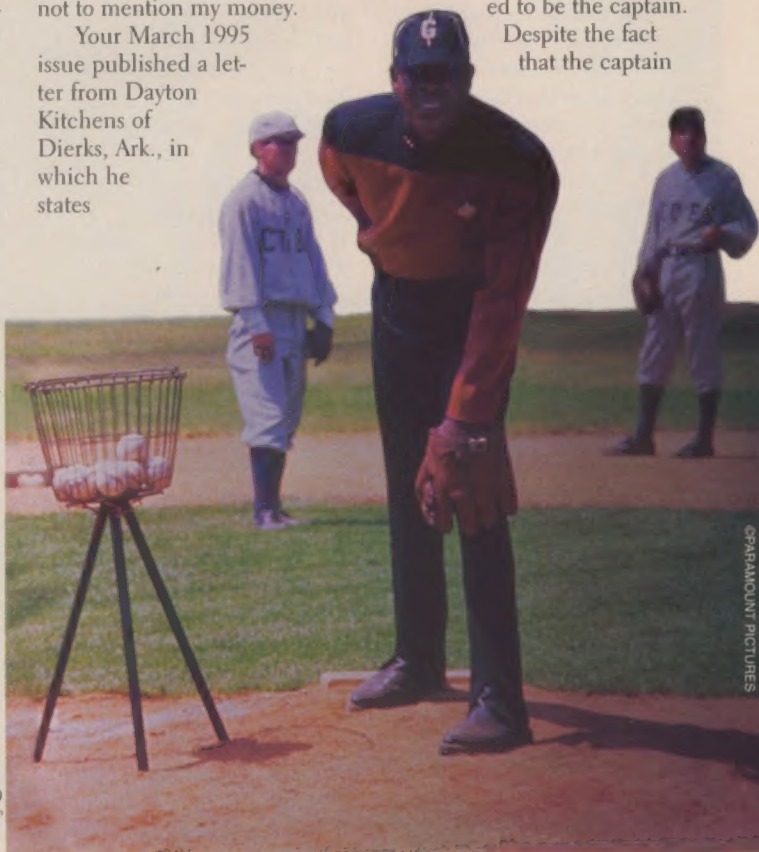
Your March 1995 issue published a letter from Dayton Kitchens of Dierks, Ark., in which he states

that the single largest group of science-fiction fans fits into the "young single male" category, and that they would like to see characters on the screen with whom they can identify. He goes on to state that many of these viewers may find little with which to identify in the new *Voyager* series, apparently because the lead characters are either female, minorities or aliens with bumpy heads.

While I believe that these statements unfortunately are true to varying degrees, I think the idea that all lead characters in series or movies should be tailored to young males is less a sexist or racist view than simply a selfish one. The young single males may be the largest group but they certainly are not the only group.

Just keeping within the *Star Trek* family of shows, the rest of us have been expected to identify with middle-aged, and until *DS9*, white males set up as our lead role models. As a female, I never wanted to be the "captain's woman," I always wanted to be the captain.

Despite the fact that the captain



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was a guy, I managed to make that leap of imagination successfully enough by identifying with some of his character traits, if not his gender. It must have been good training, because as a not-so-young white female, I have no problem identifying with the feelings of a young Asian male who is innocent, inexperienced and a long way from home.

Now, as the fourth *Star Trek* series launches, it is the other side's turn to grow up and be mature enough to make the leap beyond gender and race and learn to identify with a character for who they are, not what they are. One time in four should not be too much to ask.

KATE TOBUREN
APTOS, CA

As far as the new series *Star Trek: Voyager* goes, some fans lack optimism. One man wrote saying that he wasn't sexist, but he then said that most male viewers wouldn't identify with Capt. Kathryn Janeway. He was saying that she wouldn't be as respected as male captains. That defines sexism! I am a 22-year-old male and after seeing the first few episodes of *Voyager*, I can honestly say I love it! Kate Mulgrew is great as Capt. Janeway. She seems tough and bossy, but tries to understand each crew member and occasionally shows a little tenderness.

But the main reason *Voyager* is such a great show is that it brings in new fans. For instance, my mother and I watched the first episode of *Voyager*, and she's wanted to see every episode since. My point is that my mother is a wise lady and just never took the time to watch any of the *Star Trek* series. *Voyager* showed her what she was missing.

RODNEY WOOLARD
BRIDGETON, NC

Trek Academy

I was just reading your article about how David Loughery wanted to make a movie about the adventures of Kirk, Spock and McCoy at Starfleet

Academy and Paramount said, "No way." I think that this would be a wonderful idea for a film, but it wouldn't work. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy and DeForest Kelley are obviously too old to do a movie like this, and replacements would not do as good of a job as they would. So I was thinking, what if there could be a movie about the young Wesley Crusher (Wil Wheaton) going through Starfleet Academy? Wesley Crusher left *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in the fifth season to go to Starfleet, and we rarely heard of him again. I liked Wesley Crusher, and I was sad to see him go. I think this would be a wonderful way to bring his character back to life.

TANNER LOEWENBERG
KANSAS CITY, KS

I want to address your article on the proposed Starfleet Academy picture, *The First Frontier*. Is Harve Bennett insane or just plain dumb? Did he really believe that he could recast Kirk, Spock and McCoy without being lynched by angry mobs of fans? William Shatner and Co. have become so familiar in their roles as the crew of the Enterprise that in essence, they are the crew of the Enterprise. It would be blasphemous to even consider having others portray them.

Also, I was very pleased to read the articles on the new *Die Hard* sequel. Director John McTiernan was right not to want to make yet another version of the original. I'm afraid that if I had to sit through one more *Die Hard* clone, even if it was really like *Die Hard*, I would probably gag. Although if they ever do get around to making *Die Hard* in a deli, hey, I'll be there.

SCOTT MEEKER
JOPLIN, MO

Cool man Luke

I am glad to hear an updated *Star Wars* will be released in 1997. I was born four-and-a-half months after the release of the



first *Star Wars* and it has been one of my three favorite movies since I first saw it in 1984. (The other two are, of course, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*.) A question about the updated version: Will it include the scene where Luke watches the space battle from the farm on Tatooine? There are pictures in the *Star Wars* storybook that show Luke working on a vaporator and another of him looking through macrobinoculars and watching the battle. There is another picture in the book with Luke and Biggs Darklighter on Tatooine, but my question about that was answered in your Hollywood Lost and Found issue ("Dissecting the Director's Cut," February 1995).

One suggestion to George Lucas: I believe David Warner, the actor who's established himself as a villain by playing Sark in *Tron* and a Cardassian interrogator in the *Star Trek: TNG* episode "Chain of

Command," would make an excellent Palpatine in the prequels. He would resemble a younger emperor, before channeling the Dark Side made him old and decayed.

VINCE RADZIKOWSKI
ALBERTA, CANADA

It's not yet known which scenes George Lucas will add to the restored version of Star Wars, the release of which will precede the "prequels" he is working on. It is certain, however, that Dennis Muren's updated special effects will make the movie a whole new experience. —Ed.

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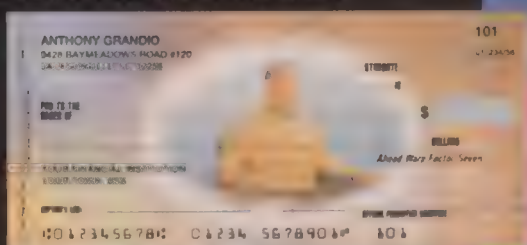
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Unlucky number *Seven*

Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman square off against a sinful killer

Now that supporting stints in *Interview With the Vampire* and *Legends of the Fall* have

made him one of the hottest properties in Hollywood, Brad Pitt will take center stage in *Seven*, a big-budget psychological thriller due out from New Line Cinema in September.

Pitt plays an eager young detective who moves to New York to fight crime in the big city. But he gets more than he bargained for when he and his partner, Oscar-winner Morgan Freeman, find one of their informants dead a mere seven days before the older cop's retirement. Each subsequent day, the two find another corpse, and each is in a gruesome condition that suggests one of the seven deadly sins—for example, to demonstrate gluttony, one victim is forced to eat until he finally dies. Mmm-m, good.

In a narrative structure that is reminiscent of both *Silence of the Lambs* and *Die Hard: With a Vengeance*, the villain plays games with the two cops—anticipating their every move in response to his killings. The tense search for the murderer takes every ounce of commitment from each detective, especially the more experienced officer, who is battling burnout as well as this especially ingenious criminal.

Pitt's wife in the film (Gwyneth Paltrow), who's trying to cope with life in the Big Apple after being uprooted from her hometown, isn't gung-ho about her husband's new job, but Pitt's let-me-at-'em character has more than enough enthusiasm for both of them.

Likewise, Pitt himself showed remarkable commitment to his role by doing many of his own stunts and by not letting a semi-serious injury from one of them slow him down. In one of the movie's chase scenes, which were filmed on the streets of Los Angeles, the actor slipped, smashing his hand through the windshield of a car. Pitt's character was supposed to be injured in that particular scene, but the film's director, *Alien³*'s David Fincher, surely didn't have that much realism in mind. But Pitt reportedly refused to be molly-coddled, as production was shut down only for a day while his hand was attended to, and the sling that he had to wear while his injury healed was quickly written into the script. ♦



Hacking goes Hollywood

A cunning hacker who breaks into sensitive industrial and military computers for the sheer thrill of it leads an elite electronic-security expert on a breathless chase along computer cable wires and satellite feeds until a final confrontation lands the *Über*-criminal behind bars. Sounds like any of a growing number of high-tech thrillers making the rounds of Hollywood studios these days, but the story of hacker Kevin Mitnick is more than just a screenwriter's fantasy.

Until his recent arrest, Mitnick's electronic exploits had even technophobes fascinated (and unnerved), and now Steven Spielberg is reportedly interested in buying the story.

A brilliant but compulsive hacker, the 31-year-old Mitnick's arrest in February was the culmination of a game of electronic chicken he played with Tsutomu Shimomura, one of

the world's foremost computer-security experts. After numerous, impressively successful hacking crimes, the cybercriminal couldn't resist challenging big game like Shimomura.

But in a twist right out of a William Gibson cyberpunk novel, Shimomura taught the cocky hacker a few tricks the hard way. With Shimomura's help, police traced Mitnick to his apartment in Raleigh, NC, where Mitnick is now in custody awaiting trial on federal charges.

John Markoff, a reporter who followed the case for *The New York Times*, will be turning the story into a book with the help of Shimomura. ♦

Much Ado About Nothing

Though George Lucas has said that his new *Star Wars* movies will be "prequels," insistent rumors on the Internet claim they will be sequels and will have a place for Mark Hamill.

But a Lucasfilm representative strongly denies the Net news flash. "Neither of those rumors is true," says the spokeswoman. "[The new films] are prequels, so Mark Hamill will not be in them." ♦



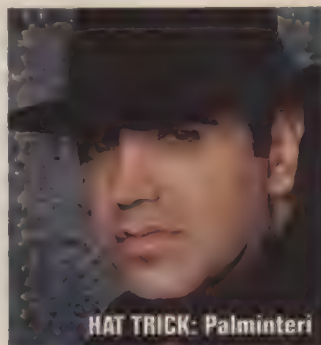
FORCED OUT: Hamill

Mulholland's fashion cops

You've heard of the Four Horsemen and the Four Tops. Now an all-star cast has come together to bring the *Four Hats* to movie theaters.

Mulholland Drive tells the story of a real-life, hat-wearing quartet of crimefighting detectives who worked the seedy streets of Los Angeles in the 1950s. The elite cops, who rode around the city together in a Cadillac, will be portrayed on screen by some of Hollywood's best tough-guy actors: Nick Nolte, Chazz Palminteri, Michael Madsen and Christopher Penn. Melanie Griffith, John Malkovich and William Petersen round out the cast.

The crime flick, set for a 1996 release, will be directed by Lee Tamahori, best known for *Once Were Warriors*, a saga of violence and brutality set among the Maori people of his New Zealand homeland. ♦



HAT TRICK: Palminteri

SWIM AT YOUR OWN RISK!

Have the high-profile problems of Geena Davis' *Cutthroat Island* and Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* kept filmmakers from diving into projects set in the watery deep? Nah. Even Disney, a notoriously cautious studio, is sticking its toe in the water.

Hollywood Pictures, a division of the Mouse House, recently plunked down \$1 million to grab *Tentacle*, a fishy tale set in the South China Sea. The story, by scripter Stephen Sommers (who'll also direct the flick), is sort of a sea-set *Alien*: A group of gunrunners encounter a wrecked, apparently deserted cruise ship that's been turned into the personal yacht of a killer sea monster. Disney is also planning a remake of its 1950s classic, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

And Disney has company beneath the waves. Director Barry Levinson has also jumped off the deep end: He'll be helming an underwater project called *Sphere*. Based on a novel published by the ubiquitous Michael Crichton, *Sphere* follows the adventures of a group of civilians and military officers on a secret mission to explore an alien spaceship on the bottom of the ocean. The genre epic is a striking departure for Levinson, who's best known for character-driven dramas like *Rain Man*, *The Natural* and *Diner*. The FX and logistical complexities of *Sphere*'s shoot are expected to rival those of James Cameron's deep-sea epic, *The Abyss*.

Not all the waterlogged projects in Hollywood's pipeline are quite as daunting, though. Film adaptation of TV's *Sea Hunt* and *Flipper* are in the offing, the latter starring *Crocodile Dundee*'s Paul Hogan. ♦



HOLLYWOOD SEES PROPHET IN COMIC

Schwarzenegger may take lead role

From 1978's *Superman* to this summer's *Batman Forever* and *Judge Dredd*, Hollywood studios have made billions of dollars by putting comic-book heroes on the silver screen. Now TriStar Pictures is looking to cash in on the latest comic hit, having recently snapped up the rights to *Prophet*, a 1-year-old color comic by Rob Liefeld. Sources report that Arnold Schwarzenegger has shown interest in the role of the muscle-bound main character, Jonathan Taylor Prophet.

The comic, for whose rights TriStar paid a six-figure sum, combines elements of both *Alien* and *Universal Soldier*. The title character awakens after 50 years in cryogenic sleep, finding himself in a world far different from the one he left. He's also cut off from the Direct Orbiting Command Center, the space satellite that had served as his central source of information and power. Along with a team of colleagues called the Berzerkers, Prophet sets out to relink with the DOCC, all the while trying to thwart a doomsday military plot.

Sounds like a tough day's work, and Prophet keeps his spirits up throughout his travails by liberally quoting from the Bible. Not just any actor, the producers should realize, can pull off a bloody, bone-crunching, military-style operation while quoting from Psalm 34 ("And God has rescued me from all my troubles and triumphed over my enemies").

Liefeld, who left Marvel to start Image Comics with six other artists in 1992, also has two other projects in development with top Hollywood names. *Doom IV* has been acquired by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, and Tom Cruise's production company is said to be developing an as-yet-unpublished comic reminiscent of the *Green Lantern* called *The Mark Five*. ♦



Trek is on track for '96

A course has been laid in for the eighth *Star Trek* movie. Rick Berman, who produced the successful TNG transitional flick *Generations*, has predictably been tapped as executive producer of the next excursion of Capt. Picard and the gang. Berman also will help script the next *Trek* trip, but there's no word yet on who his collaborators will be.

Berman told *The Hollywood Reporter* that the new film would concentrate exclusively on the *Next Generation* crew



GREAT BIRD: Berman

and would have "a great sense of adventure and a bit more fun than the last movie had." ♦

Mercury women rise

Tom Hanks better get ready for some female company out there in space.

Just as the two-time Oscar winner's true-life space saga *Apollo 13* (see page 36) lifts off at the box office, filmmakers are readying another NASA tale for big-screen treatment.

Two competing projects currently being developed in Hollywood center around the 13 women who were selected by NASA as astronauts in the 1960s when the space agency was fearful of being outdone by the Soviet Union, which was rumored to be putting female comrades in space. Documentary producer Jim Cross secured the rights to a dozen of the women's stories, and turned

that into a project called *The Mercury 13*, which was recently acquired by Turner Entertainment. The story of the remaining astronaut has been packaged into a similar script called *Lady Icarus*. Hollywood sources report that the two projects may merge before either is ready to move in front of the cameras.

Though their narratives diverge at various points, both films focus on the women's ultimately unsuccessful struggle to get lawmakers and NASA bureaucrats to send them into space. The first woman to make it onto NASA's launchpad was Sally K. Ride, who went up with the space shuttle *Challenger* in 1983. ♦

Brando goes Down Under

Producer Ed Pressman, who brought *The Crow* and *Street Fighter* to the big screen, has decided to take his big-budget remake of *The Island of Dr.*

Moreau to the land Down Under. Portions of the film will be shot in Australia's tropical northern rain forest, which will double as the diabolical doctor's island lair.

Marlon Brando, who'll play Dr. Moreau in this latest incarnation of the classic H.G. Wells horror tale, will be joined on the set by fellow cast members Bruce Willis and Demi Moore when shooting gets under way in Queensland in August. Willis is currently finishing up the futuristic sci-fi thriller *The Twelve Monkeys* for director Terry Gilliam. ♦



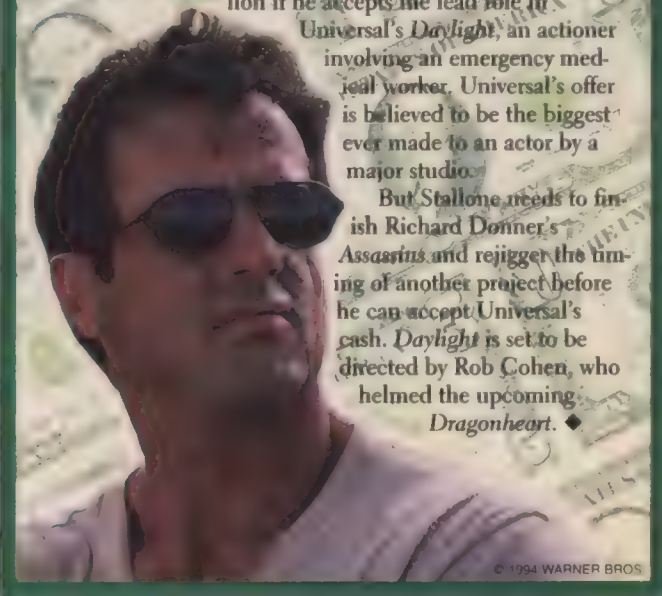
MONEY MAN

Though it's been almost 20 years since he received a best actor nomination for *Rocky* (which won best picture) and a decade since his last megahit, *Rambo*, slew all box-office competitors, Sylvester Stallone is suddenly the most sought-after star in Hollywood again.

First, Sly was promised \$20 million by the desperate-for-recognition indie Savoy Pictures for an undetermined project. And now he'll get an equally mind-boggling \$17.5 million if he accepts the lead role in

Universal's *Daylight*, an actioner involving an emergency medical worker. Universal's offer is believed to be the biggest ever made to an actor by a major studio.

But Stallone needs to finish Richard Donner's *Assassins* and rejigger the timing of another project before he can accept Universal's cash. *Daylight* is set to be directed by Rob Cohen, who helmed the upcoming *Dragonheart*. ♦



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Douglas may take *Thief*

With the success of recycled TV fodder ranging from *The Fugitive* to *The Brady Bunch*, yet another small-screen series is headed to movie theaters. *It Takes a Thief*, the late-1960s series that starred Robert Wagner as the cool cat burglar Alex Mundy, has been picked up by Universal Pictures for the big screen. As in the series, the film will focus on the exploits of a thief who is blackmailed into practicing his larcenous art on behalf of the government.

Producers of the film hope to convince Michael Douglas to star in the remake, but Douglas is a busy man. Along with partner Steve Reuther, Douglas heads up a production company, which the two have been busy snapping up action-thriller scripts, including the unpublished novel *Extreme Denial*.

That project, in which Douglas may star, centers around a CIA agent who retires



to live the quiet life at his ranch in Sante Fe, only to go back to spying to find out who killed the woman he loves. *Denial* was penned by David Morrell, the same writer who launched the *Rambo* franchise with his book *First Blood*. ♦

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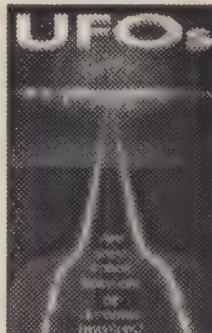
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Chan ready to *Rumble* in U.S.

Fans of Asian action hero Jackie Chan no longer have to haunt their local video store to find the Hong Kong action king's latest flicks.

New Line Cinema has struck a deal with Chan's production company to release his *Rumble in the Bronx* stateside. As part of a four-picture deal, New Line will also distribute a possible sequel to *Rumble*, as well as two additional Chan action pictures.

"Because of its New York setting and the growing interest in Asian cinema, we believe that [*Rumble*] is the right vehicle for Chan to win over American audiences," New Line executive president Michael Lynne told *Daily Variety*. In the light of *Rumble*'s \$40 million international take and a recent sellout Chan film festival in New York, the studio's Mark Ordesky said, "we wanted to ride this wave of interest in the performer, and *Rumble* was the film that had the best crossover potential."



In the film, the comical kamikaze Chan plays a police officer from Hong Kong who travels to New York to take on the American mob. Chan, who takes pride in doing his own stunts (see *CINESCAPE*, February 1995), is up to his usual tricks in the flick—leap-

ing from rooftops, dodging bullets, cracking heads and, of course, kicking butt.

New Line plans to launch a major media campaign to hype the Asian star before *Rumble* hits theaters, but a release date has not been decided on yet. ♦

Hatchet job for Woo and Avary

Two names associated with redhot director Quentin Tarantino have moved up a few notches on the Hollywood food chain.

Roger Avary, who won an Academy Award for co-scripting *Pulp Fiction* with Tarantino, and John Woo, whose in-your-face Asian actioners have been cited by *Pulp*'s director as a primary influence, have teamed up to make the police actioner *Hatchetman* for New Line Cinema. But before Woo can get behind the cameras on that project, he'll have to wrap up *Broken Arrow*, the airborne adventure movie starring John Travolta that began shooting in May. *Arrow* has been put on the fast track by Warner Bros., which is aiming at a Christmas release for the flick.

Avary, who'll script *Hatchetman*, has also kept busy: He directed the a Rutger Hauer science-fiction TV pilot *Mr. Stitch* and is developing *RPM*, a Dolph Lundgren vehicle about car thieves in France. ♦

H O L L Y W O O D

C H A T T E R

Hot Pipes: Mel Gibson's production company has acquired *Pipes*, an Indiana Jones-style adventure about a search for diamonds in the wilds of Canada. Gibson is tentatively set to star.

Seagal's Third Strike: Warner Bros. has acquired a script called *Pandora* that may be used as the basis for the third *Under Siege* flick. This time around Steven Seagal would be saving a defense plant from (who else?) terrorists.

Saints Be Praised: Production on the film version of the hit 1960s TV series *The Saint* will finally get under way this August. Director Philip Noyce will shoot on location in Europe.



Hero in the Hood: John Singleton (*Boyz n the Hood*) will bring Luke Cage, a black comic-book hero, to the big screen for Edward R. Pressman Films (*The Crow*).

Sands of Time: Julian Sands, star of the creepy *Boxing Helena*, will be CBS' *Tomorrow Man* come fall. He'll play an android



who travels back in time to present-day Earth.

Weird Trio: Directors Oliver Stone, Tim Burton and Francis Ford Coppola will join forces to produce and direct the pilot for an HBO series called *Weird Tales*, based on a defunct fantasy/horror anthology magazine.

Wood Cuts: Fans of cult director Ed Wood will be glad to hear that Rhino Video recently reissued six of the director's "classics," including *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (see page 75) and the autobiographical *Glen or Glenda*, as well as the exquisitely titled retrospective *Ed Wood: Look Back in Angora*.

Great Scotts: The Scott brothers, responsible for such top-flight films as *Alien* (Ridley) and *Thelma and Louise* (Tony) have formed their own production company, which is gearing up to find projects for the two directors, and they also recently headed up a group of investors that bought Shepperton Studios, a film complex near London.

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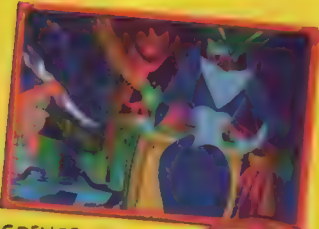
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Keanu Reeves and director Robert Longo explore the dark side of the info-age in *Johnny Mnemonic*

by Mo Ryan

Human beings are little more than techno-drones in William Gibson's future, useful to their corporate overlords only as workers or as consumers of prepackaged mind candy. To the director of *Johnny Mnemonic*, that sounds a lot like the present.

"The future is not something I'm really interested in," says Robert Longo, the controversial visual artist who helmed the cyberpunk epic starring Keanu Reeves. "What I'm interested in is using [the future] to talk about now. I think it's the same with William [Gibson]. *Johnny Mnemonic* is just an extreme version of now," Longo says.

The fledgling filmmaker says Johnny's story is about the potential dangers of relying on technology at the expense of less marketable concepts like compassion and altruism. In the movie, Reeves plays a data courier who stores information in his "wet-wired" brain. His greed leads him to take on a job that's too big for his cerebellum to handle, and when the deal goes sour, Johnny is left with a bleeding brainpan and

no one to help him download the information before it kills him.

"Johnny Mnemonic is his job," says Longo. "He's like the ultimate Yuppie." To free up storage space in his brain, Johnny has "dumped" many of his childhood memories. Now he suddenly finds himself with no control over his situation, and he must rely on trust and other human qualities that he had long ago abandoned as useless and irrelevant.

"This role is very demanding because of the limitations of what you know about this guy," Longo says. "This is about a guy who avoids everything ... like *The Man Who Knew Too Much* or something like that. It's just about a guy who goes about doing his job and takes a real risk and ends up in way over his head."

When he began casting the movie, Longo despaired of ever finding an actor who could embody Johnny's surface sheen and his inner turmoil. Then Keanu Reeves came along. "One of the great moments was when he got fully dressed as the character—to see this guy that William and I had talked about since 1989. That was really



quite a rush, more than any set [design] or anything else," Longo says.

Gibson, author of the short story upon which the film is based (as well as sci-fi classics like *Neuromancer* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*), reserves the highest praise for Longo's vision of his work and Reeves' interpretation of Johnny.

"The first time I came in [to the set], I was on the verge of tears for about two hours. It was just emotionally overwhelming," the author says. "For 13 years I've [been] describing environments like this. For some reason, it's very central to my art. And I never expected to see [my vision] realized to this degree."

Keanu Reeves says he envisioned Johnny as a man who, despite his avaricious nature, takes pride in his work. "It's not in the script," the actor says, "but from my own thinking, it was a reputation [issue], so it's a risk he knowingly takes on."

Reeves, Gibson says, captured the sort of overly clever kid that the author wrote about in the original story, which was published in *Omni* magazine in 1981. "There's a childlike quality, which, when you get to the end of the movie, you understand—he makes perfect sense."

Those childlike qualities that emerge in Johnny may have something to do with the fact that, as the story unfolds, memories that he had thought were long gone come crowding back into his overloaded brain. Suddenly, he is discovering—or rediscovering—himself.

For Longo, whose visual art has long been concerned with morality's place in a cynical and crass world, that emerging humanity in Johnny is what made the character fascinating. "He's on a journey," Longo says. "[He] finally comes to find value in life, in friendships and relationships and things like that. It's kind of a cathartic awakening."

But while *Johnny Mnemonic* is made accessible through its exploration of character, its narrative is powered by politics, both personal and political. It's no accident that in his flight from those seeking his head, Johnny ends up among the Lo Tekes, a group of outlaws who reject the oppressive technology of the electronic future.

"I find [the on-line world] kind of bullshit," Longo says with typical bluntness. "I think people have to improve as people. It's kind of scary that people think, 'Now we'll just take all our problems on-line.'" As Johnny finds out, cyberspace offers nowhere to hide from the demons within. ♦

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WITH A NEW DIRECTOR, A SLEW OF
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BEHIND THE MASK, *BATMAN FOREVER*
BOLDLY RE-ENVISIONS ONE OF THE
MOST SUCCESSFUL SAGAS IN MOVIE
HISTORY. HERE'S THE STORY BEHIND
THE DARK KNIGHT'S THIRD FEATURE FLIGHT

BY DEAN LAMANNA

The tent rising more than 60 feet inside Stage 16 on the Warner Bros. backlot in Burbank, Calif., would seem the perfect wrap party site for the year's most anticipated movie. But no mere studio fete is unfolding within. On this sixth day of March—the 106th shooting day of the studio's \$60-million-plus production of *Batman Forever*—the soundstage is doubling as an art deco coliseum called the Hippodrome. Inside the tent's black-and-white-striped walls the Gotham Charly Circus is running full tilt. The Fellini-esque ring surrounded by six Herculean statues holding giant drums and bleachers spilling over with Gotham City's social elite, is a kaleidoscope of sweeping blue and white spotlights with star-shaped beams. The Taping Circus Moni, Pop, Chris and Dick—are performing before 100 babies to the crowd's thunderous approval.



Without warning, confusion erupts amid the din as escaped mental patient Harvey

Dent/Two-Face—determined to find his archrival, Batman, who's somewhere in the crowd—crashes the affair. The villain's black-leather thugs swing from the ceiling of the tent on ropes, throwing off the aerialists' carefully timed routine and causing all of the family members, save for Dick Grayson, to fall to their deaths.

It's a pivotal scene that will unspool early on in *Batman Forever*—one that, when fully shot, will feature more than 150 actors, stuntmen and extras and will effectively introduce Batman's sidekick,

Robin, in the character of Dick Grayson. But the importance of the setup doesn't prevent director Joel Schumacher from showing off the film's trailer for some visitors between takes. "Is the volume up?" says the ringmaster himself, perched on a director's chair in front of a trio of video monitors.

"Tomorrow's our last day of shooting," he

announces as the fast-paced preview that has been whetting moviegoers' appetites for months zips across the screens.

The trailer ends, the visitors applaud. The film's release date pops up on the monitors. "Somebody better finish it—it's opening June 16!" Schumacher says with a laugh. As the group disperses, few hear the director's softer follow-up statement, which he utters with a slight shake of his head: "Every time I see that date ..."

CAPE FEARS

Making *Batman Forever* has been a long haul for Schumacher. By the time the film unfurls its gaudier, bawdier cape this month, it will be two years since Warner Bros. toppers Bob Daly and Terry Semel entrusted the pony-tailed 55-year-old with the studio's most-prized franchise. During

"INSTEAD OF HARVEY/
TWO-FACE JUST BEING
CONSERVATIVE ON ONE SIDE
AND INSANE ON THE OTHER,
HE'S NOW CONSERVATIVE
ON ONE SIDE AND *OUTRAGEOUSLY*
INSANE ON THE OTHER."

—JOEL SCHUMACHER



that long, sustained blur, he turned John Grisham's *The Client* into a hit film for the same studio and coordinated the cast, crew and incredibly complex physical production of what is—and likely will remain—the biggest assignment of his career.

"I did think it would be a lot of fun to make a *Batman* movie," says the director, who, though energetic and easygoing to a fault, nevertheless harbored some concerns as he entered the realm of Michael Keaton's Dark Knight. The first involved Tim Burton, the helmer of *Batman* and *Batman Returns* and a close friend of Schumacher's. "I wanted to make sure it was something Tim wanted me to do," he says. "If he didn't want me to direct it, I wouldn't have done it. The only reason there was a third film was that Tim had done a great job with the first two. But he was dying for me to do it. Tim didn't want to do a third; he's such a great artist, and he wanted to go on to other projects."

Schumacher's second major concern

was, in hindsight, a most unfounded one. "I thought, *Gee, I wonder if anyone's interested in a third Batman?* With all the heat on the movie now, it seems silly to say that. But I really didn't know. The second it was announced that we were doing a third *Batman*, I realized what a loyal following the character has."

Galvanized by the prospect of tackling and possibly retooling the popular icon, Schumacher threw himself into preproduction with the full support of Warner Bros., for which he had directed *The Lost Boys* and *Falling Down* in addition to *The Client*.

"When a studio trusts you, and you've made successful pictures for them, they have a tendency to give you a lot of freedom," he says. "I showed them some preliminary sketches and models, and they seemed very excited. I don't know what they had in mind or if they had a vision of what they wanted; I think they were hoping that I would."

Tim Burton's relegation to producer on

Batman Forever allowed Warner Bros. to leaven his dark vision, which reveled in the sewers of Gotham three years ago in *Batman Returns*. No one may have voiced it outright, but the studio sentiment—with apologies to Jack Nicholson's Joker—was evident:

This franchise needs an enemy!

DYNAMIC DUALITY

Everyone was confident that there was a great Bruce Wayne/Batman tale yet to be told. And Warner Bros. believed that it had found a winner in a screenplay by Lee Batchler and Janet Scott Batchler—a fresh and action-filled storyline brimming with humor. Schumacher also liked the script, which he felt came closer to showing Bruce Wayne grappling with his double life than ever before.

Though thoroughly enamored of the



HOLY ROLLER: The Caped Crusader gets around like a bat out of hell in the new and improved Batmobile

duality theme, the director expressed some reservations about the script in a meeting with the Batchlers in July 1993. "They wanted to have the Riddler, and I wanted to have Two-Face—an extraordinarily popular villain in the comics and in *Batman: The Animated Series*, which I think is excellent. I also wanted to bring the Robin character in. I wanted the script to be about dual personality because those villains and Robin, like Bruce Wayne/Batman, have two identities also."

studio, the Batchlers left the project and Schumacher hired scripter Akiva Goldsman, with whom he'd worked fruitfully on *The Client*, to do a polish. "The script had come to a certain place, and it was my job then to bring it further," says Goldsman, who is writing and producing New Line's feature revival of *Lost in Space* and adapting John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* for Schumacher to direct this fall. A fan of *Batman* since early childhood, Goldsman "supersaturated" himself in the comics and graphic novels of

Batman, who caused the ex-Gotham City D.A.'s disfigurement. Meanwhile, Edward Nygma/The Riddler (Jim Carrey), an employee of Wayne Enterprises, has a fanatical fixation on his boss: Disappointed by Bruce Wayne's lackluster response to a new invention of his, Nygma also becomes bent on vengeance. Feeling overwhelmed by this double trouble, Bruce Wayne/Batman feels compelled to hit the couch of Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), a criminal psychiatrist who specializes in dual personalities, to discuss the dichotomy of his own existence and his difficulties with his new ward, Dick Grayson/Robin (Chris O'Donnell).

"It's not really a sequel—it's a brand-new ball game," enthuses *Batman*'s 73-year-old creator, Bob Kane, who serves as creative consultant on the film. "The first two scripts were copies of one another: Jack Nicholson, as the Joker, and Danny DeVito, as the Penguin, both wanted to be mayor. So the second movie wasn't an original concept."

Last June, with Schumacher nearly finished casting this ambitious scenario, another Bat-drama arose when it was announced that Michael Keaton would not be donning the suit again. Although the 43-year-old actor had expressed enthusiasm about the third movie in public statements made just three months earlier, Keaton reportedly demanded between \$10-15 million plus gross profit points and a slice of the merchandising pie—a reward that Warner Bros. apparently decided was too rich.

Keaton's producing partner, Harry Colomby, denied in a published report that salary was the bugaboo: "Not doing this movie means he probably gave up \$30 million, based on his back-end deal." Other sources said Keaton was unhappy about his lack of creative sway over the film. According to one, following a meeting with Schumacher, "Michael was not feeling confident. ... He was worried that the character ... wasn't going to be developed the way he wanted it to be developed."

In a statement released by Warner Bros. in early July, Keaton said: "I look forward to having the opportunity to play a wide variety of roles of many genres. I hope that several of them will be at Warner Bros., where I've had terrific experiences, both with the *Batman* movies and with such other projects as *Clean and Sober* and *Beetlejuice*."

"Some people don't want to play superheroes the rest of their life," Schumacher shrugged at the time. "Even Sean Connery left James Bond." Today, the director steps gingerly when asked to describe the tenor of the Warner-Keaton talks. "I have to be very elegant about this," he says, proceeding to stammer inelegantly: "Let me ... I think that it is, um ... my responsibility is to take the higher ground here. I think it's important to stick to the studio line here, which is, you know, that at a certain point, you know. ..."

Using the word "considerations" as a

THE TWO FACES OF HARVEY DENT

TOMMY LEE vs. BILLY DEE

“I don’t see BILLY DEE WILLIAMS as the most evil, psychotic killer in Gotham City. He’s a wonderful actor; I’m sure he could play it. But because he had never played Two-Face really—he played HARVEY DENT—I decided to go with TOMMY.”

—Director JOEL SCHUMACHER

Within a short time, the Batchlers managed to devise an all-inclusive storyline. "[The basic plot] was hardly altered," marvels Schumacher. "Dialogue and scenes were altered, but they came up with a wonderful way to bring all these characters together. They pitched it to Tim and me on a conference call—we were all in different parts of the United States—and I gave them an okay right away." The revised screenplay draft was delivered early that fall.

With contractual obligations to another

Frank Miller and others—taking breaks from the reading only to review the first two movies and some of the cartoons. As a result of his indulgence, more mythic elements about the legends of both Batman and Robin were woven into the script.

The final screenplay draft—credited to the Batchlers and Goldsman—is, according to a studio source, a "festival of dualities" wherein the dreaded Harvey Dent/Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) escapes from Arkham Asylum to embark on a vendetta against



AVOIDING THE BOY BLUNDER

FORSAKING THE BRIGHT PLUMAGE AND EARNEST CHIRPINESS OF ROBIN'S PAST, THE NEW DICK GRAYSON IS LESS A SIDEKICK THAN A KICK IN THE SIDE

Holding court in a modestly furnished sitting room at the *Batman Forever* offices on the Warner Bros. lot, Chris O'Donnell is juiced about his role as Dick Grayson/Robin—which, for him, is a serious change of pace. “I’m no martial-arts guy, but I can kick a little bit,” says the affable actor, 25, who hit it big three years ago in *Scent of a Woman* and earned raves for his work in the recent drama *Circle of Friends*. “I got to drive the Batmobile and the Batboat. They didn’t trust me in the Batwing, though!”

To hear O'Donnell describe him, Robin no longer is the unflaggingly faithful, squeaky-clean tag-along that most Batfans know from television reruns. In fact, he has become a true Generation Xer—presenting “older brother” Batman with an edgy crimefighting partner. “Dick Grayson is a tough kid who has grown up on the road. Bruce Wayne is the kind of rich guy he just resents.”

“Grayson is no longer a wide-eyed innocent,” confirms Joel Schumacher, who wanted to avoid the “shallow and silly” Robin popularized by Bruce Ward in the 1960s TV series. “Circus kids travel, so they have to be able to take care of themselves.”

The director, a former costume artist, felt that the revised character called for a radically new get-up. “Not only is Batman’s costume beautiful,” he says, “it gives you camouflage at night. It doesn’t make sense for Robin to go out in the dark in electric yellow and green. So I created a suit like Batman’s

Schumacher, unwilling to banish the fast-foodish color scheme completely, incorporated it into the Flying Graysons performance togs. Quips O'Donnell: “I’m bringing that Spandex number home. Thanksgiving dinner will never be the same.”

Apart from the circus outfit, Schumacher wanted Robin to look like a “tough, street-smart, urban kid.” The schtick would be these guys in cut-off sleeves and leather jackets who hitchhike around town. “I thought, ‘I could be a role model for him kind of sexy, you know?’”

Yet “sexy” to some can mean “deviant” to others. *Batman Forever*’s Bob Latt, 35, a former *Baywatch* model, told hoop dreams about Grayson’s earring. “He didn’t understand it,” says O'Donnell, chuckling. “I told him, ‘Don’t worry, it’s on the left ear. It’s okay.’”

It bothered me because I’ve never liked seeing an earring in a young kid’s ear. [Schumacher, who says O'Donnell thinks O'Donnell is “a hell of an actor. He’s still very manly.”] The lip-synching is a little off when Grayson becomes Robin.)

O'Donnell thinks it would be “cool” if the character got his own franchise. “I would love to see a movie where Robin is the world’s most wanted. He’s stalked through the back alleys of Gotham by a certain feral feline. I bet Catwoman and I could create a serious romance he says with a mild leer. “At least I’d be calling to be a... Di-

TIT FOR BAT

THE DIRECTOR OF *BATMAN FOREVER* TRIES TO NIP A POTENTIALLY TURGID CONTROVERSY IN THE BUD



Hollywood is always rife with breast-beating when the studios throw open their summer publicity war chests. And sometimes the hype tweaks the public interest in strange, unexpected ways. Take, for instance, the brewing brouhaha over Bob Ringwood's new design for Bruce Wayne's vigilante uniform in *Batman Forever*. Not only is the get-up more buff, more sleek and more chic than in previous outings, it has—*clutch thy bosom!*—nipples.

"The suit is like a second skin: it's anatomy," explains Joel Schumacher, no doubt bracing for the onslaught of late-night TV jokes about Batman sporting Bat-bras and breast-feeding Robin. "It has the beautiful musculature of an idealized human body, including fantastic abs, an incredible collarbone—all the ideal anatomical features of a great stat-

ue, of a living statue. So why wouldn't it have nipples? Are men's nipples a hot subject in America? Wait until [audiences] see the Bat-butt. There's a shot of it as Bruce Wayne is getting dressed in his suit. It'll be scandalous."

Suddenly, the director's incredulity trips over into bemused hysteria. "I mean, after *Basic Instinct*, what are we talking about?" he says. "Isn't this an era where people are opening their legs in movies? And we're talking about rubber nipples on the Batsuit? I love it! I love it! I feel so... so dangerous. I'll probably be on *Nightline*, like Oliver Stone, talking about the Batman nipples. This will be like the grassy knoll [in Stone's Kennedy assassination theory]: Oliver has the grassy knoll, and I have nipples. Well, the punishment fits the crime, I guess. You can see where my mind has been all these years." And the public's.—DL

euphemism for "demands," Schumacher finally bites the bullet. "Well, the truth is that Michael came into this with many considerations that really had nothing to do with me at all because we hardly know each other. A lot of it was based on the past. He had so many considerations that I think it gave Warner Bros. and me our own considerations. And at a certain point we all shook

hands and walked separate ways.

"Certainly, everybody at Warner Bros. is very fond of Michael and only wishes him well," he continues. "Certainly, I've always been a fan of his and I wish him well. It's difficult... because there is an erroneous idea that somehow we had creative differences on the concept of this movie and he walked away. But it never even got that far."

A VAL(ue)-ADDED HERO

However far the talks actually got, Schumacher was happy to start with a clean slate. The search for a replacement, in fact, was swift and painless. In the spring of last year, "the heads of the studio called me out of the blue one day and asked me if I had ever thought of anyone else in the role," the director recalls. "I said, 'Yes, Val Kilmer. Why?' They said they were just curious. So I didn't think much more about it until a couple weeks later, when I was called to their offices. 'Do you still like Val Kilmer for this role?' they asked. And I said, 'Absolutely.' They said, 'Well, you better ask him.'"

This turn of events was like *deja vu* for Schumacher who, only a few months earlier, was bowled over by Kilmer in *Tombstone*. "Val just leapt off the screen," he says. "I thought, 'Boy, he really would make a phenomenal Bruce Wayne/Batman.' But I was just musing because at that time I knew that Michael Keaton was a part of the deal. When I was able to bring Val Kilmer in, it really gave me and the rest of the creative team an opportunity to feel that we were doing a new [movie] instead of a sequel."

Bringing Kilmer in was, alas, a tricky undertaking in itself. "Finding Val was very difficult," explains Schumacher, "because he was in the middle of the African bush researching a screenplay he was writing about a man living with primitive tribes. It took his agent about three days to track him down, and when they found him, he was in—believe it or not—a bat cave! They got him onto some phone and his agent said, 'Joel Schumacher wants you to play Batman.' And he said, 'Tell Joel yes!'"

While maintaining that both Kilmer and Michael Keaton are "extraordinary talents," Schumacher notes that the former does much more than merely replace the latter inside the Batsuit. "A 34-year-old Bruce Wayne who dresses up and goes out at night as Batman is a different person," he says, adding: "Having played Jim Morrison [in Oliver Stone's 1991 biopic *The Doors*] and Doc Holliday, among other great roles, Val's capable of great depth and sensitivity. He has a complexity and an intelligence that is interesting to watch. He's got humor—and he looks great in that suit."

Bob Kane agrees. "Michael did well with what he possesses physically, but Val's more Batmanesque: He's suave and laid back, and he personifies Batman and Bruce Wayne more than Michael, who frankly doesn't have the chiseled characteristics I drew in the comic book."

Kilmer also torques up the oft-neglected

libido of Bruce Wayne. "He's more sensual," Kane says. "He's more Valentino—he's handsome in a movie-star way, where Michael Keaton is the boy next door. His derring-do deeds are very acrobatic, too; he does a lot of his own stunts."

Or at least as many as humanly possible in Batman's 40-pound, latex-based outfit, which costume designer Bob Ringwood has likened to "a large makeup sponge." Kilmer himself has described the experience of wearing it vividly: "You put that thing on and you want to inflict pain, it's so cumbersome."

Batman Forever places greater emphasis on martial arts than the earlier movies and contains "a great deal of action," acknowledges Schumacher. "Everybody—and probably most of all Val—had to be in great

"Dr. Meridian is in love with Batman, and Bruce Wayne's in love with her. She's in a triangle with the same man and doesn't know it." So does the good doctor have an easier time slipping between Batman and his skintight latex skivvies than Vicki Vale? "You'll have to see the movie," he says coyly.

Perhaps it is the Caped Crusader's new, more anatomically correct body suit that turns Dr. Meridian's horn up (see sidebar, page 28). "Yeah, the Batman suit has nipples, and so does the Robin suit," says Schumacher, with the weary laugh of someone who has debated the finer points of male mammary glands ad nauseam. "Bob Kane, who has been the most supportive person to me in making this film, still doesn't understand why the costumes have nipples and why Robin wears an earring."

kind of acolyte, neophyte Robin—the blue-eyed, eager-to-please 12- or 14-year-old of the comic books—was not at all what the world wanted to see," says Akiva Goldman. "He saw Robin as a gypsy: This is a kid who's traveled around the country with a circus. He is not impressed by Bruce Wayne. He is not impressed by the high-society world of Gotham City. As Joel and I worked together on this, we realized something that would be very exciting and very different from the comic books: If you are Bruce Wayne, and you witness an echo of the event that was formative in terms of your life—in this case, Robin orphaned violently at the Gotham Charity Circus—you're not going to be eager to take this child in and have him relive the life you've lived. Because, let's face it, going out and running around in that



CALL HER DOCTOR LOVE: Nicole Kidman



WHAT LITTLE GIRLS ARE MADE OF: Sugar (Drew Barrymore) and Spice (Debi Derry Jones)

shape. We made the suit much more flexible, much more body-conscious, but it's still very heavy; your skin doesn't breathe in it. Val did this one big martial-arts sequence where he did 98 percent of the whole scene—all the kicks, everything—in the suit and the cape. Which is no small feat, let me tell you. He brought a great deal of energy, commitment and virility to the film."

Helping to stir that virility is criminal psychiatrist Dr. Chase Meridian, played by an exceptionally alluring Nicole Kidman (who bested, among others, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Linda Hamilton for the part). "Yes, in my Gotham City that's what criminal psychiatrists look like—it's better than Dr. Ruth!" Schumacher defends, revealing:

THE BROTHERS GRIM

Aside from being the director's nod to '90s morés and styles, such hip, if picayune, details lend some earthiness to a pair of characters who are barely tethered to reality. In the case of Dick Grayson/Robin, played by Chris O'Donnell, the earring is just the beginning: Schumacher determined that a complete wardrobe and personality makeover was in order (see sidebar, page 27).

"Joel was convinced from the start that a

cape every night ain't normal."

Schumacher clarifies: "You're always trying to save a younger person from making the same mistakes that you did. Because Bruce Wayne is dealing with the fact that he has become a person who is a vigilante at night, he perhaps wishes for Dick Grayson a saner, more sober road."

But that doesn't necessarily mean Easy Street. In fact, after Wayne offers Grayson shelter in the wake of the circus attack, the air between them becomes fairly antagonistic. "We've created a kind of reluctant partnership for them—one that's resonant in terms of how people actually get together in life," says Goldman. "It's never, 'Gee, okay, why don't you just join up and we'll do it



"IF YOU ARE BRUCE WAYNE,
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NIGHT AIN'T NORMAL."

—SCREENWRITER
AKIVA GOLDSMAN

have nothing to do with reality," Schumacher laments. "One of them had Val and Jim feuding—a month before we even started shooting! Journalists kept calling me to say, 'What's this about Val and Jim on the set?' I would say, 'There is no set. We haven't started shooting yet!' So one of them says, 'Then they're fighting during rehearsals.' I said, 'There is no rehearsal.' And they said, 'No, no, no—I have an eyewitness who was in the rehearsal and saw them fighting.' I said, 'There's no rehearsal. Jim's father died; he's in Toronto. We had to cancel it.' They went, 'Oh.' That seemed to be proof to them."

The director, despite the silly gossip, is ecstatic over how the irrepressibly questioning baddie turned out—as is creator Kane, who compares Carrey's work to Jack Nicholson's unhinged performance as the Joker in *Batman*. But according to an anecdote related by Chris O'Donnell in March, folks on the set got a little, uh, Carrey'd away with the box-office Boy Wonder: "Everyone would just stare and wait for him to say something funny. The minutes would tick by, and people were hovering and watching him. One day, Jim said, 'Hey, can I have a Diet Coke?' and 10 people started roaring."

Although juggling all of these potent personalities was a risky and difficult job, screenwriter Goldsman feels that the audience will get more Bat for the buck.

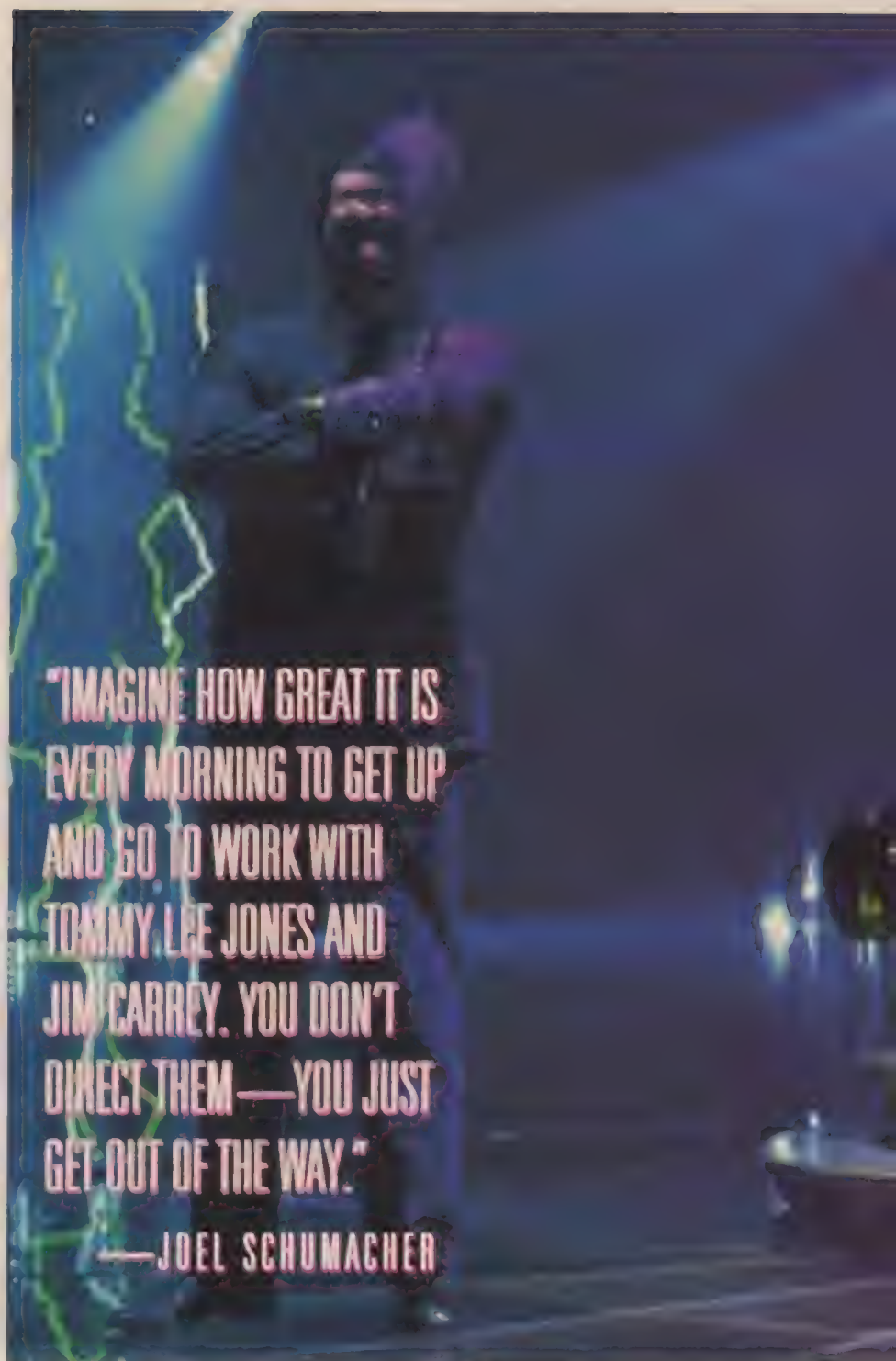
"Ensemble pieces are particularly well suited to *Batman* because, in a funny way, different characters can represent different tones. So having a variety of them—if they are well drawn, aptly cast, well directed and well acted—not only moves you from character to character, but from tone to tone."

"I like ensemble because life is an ensemble," says Schumacher, a rabid Robert Altman fan whose filmography (which includes the genre items *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* and *Flatliners*) falls almost entirely within that category. "I'm not partial to directing stories about one person going through one thing for two hours."

The director dismisses any suggestion that the villains will upstage the hero in *Batman Forever*, as they did in Tim Burton's films. "I certainly think that everyone is very, very strong in the piece. But the secret of ensemble is making sure all those strong characters have their aria ... their time."

A HUE TO A THRILL

The shepherd of the ensemble must have his aria, too, and that is the film itself. "The old [adage], 'Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,' is something I consider a great insult," says Schumacher, who has avoided doing sequels to his own hit movies and is tired of speculation about how he will tie Part Three to Parts One and Two. "When



"IMAGINE HOW GREAT IT IS
EVERY MORNING TO GET UP
AND GO TO WORK WITH
TOMMY LEE JONES AND
JIM CARREY. YOU DON'T
DIRECT THEM—YOU JUST
GET OUT OF THE WAY."

—JOEL SCHUMACHER

you imitate someone, you insult [everyone involved]. And when people imitate something, they always miss what was special about it in the first place.

"So I didn't involve myself in the first two movies. I didn't reread the reviews and I didn't run the films again. I did not ask Tim Burton, 'Why did you do this and why did you do that?' I wasn't asked to do the third of Tim's movies. And I didn't think those works needed to be corrected."

Schumacher, instead, went to the print incarnations for inspiration. "I drenched myself in hundreds of comic books," he says. "Batman has been around since 1939, and

there are so many great artists and writers who have worked with the character—especially in the last 10 years. I had a field day.

"My goal, with deference to what Tim had already created, was to make a living comic book," the director continues. "You know when you're reading a great comic book and suddenly they'll do a whole sequence all in one hue—like magenta or blue? You know how comic books take great license with color and with dynamics? Well, I wanted us to try to attempt that as best we could. I wanted people to have an experience of a Batman comic, and I wanted to make it fun."



Schumacher & Co.'s pseudo-liberation from the rest of the film series fostered a heady creative freedom. "Because we weren't part of anything that had gone before, it was very fresh to us. I was able to do a brand-new car and a brand-new city. Gotham City doesn't suddenly look like all crystal and jewels or anything; what I actually tried to do was blend every decade from the '30s on up through the year 2000."

Bob Kane, for one, is elated by the revisions. "As creative consultant, I take the scripts and give my opinion as to what I think will work or won't work. Tim Burton listened to about 30 to 40 percent of my

opinions, as did Joel Schumacher. And Joel, like Tim, has caught the visual. The sets are magnificent, if not better, than those in the first two movies. They're spectacular—like Cecil B. DeMille."

If Cecil were still around, he'd probably have production designer Barbara Ling under exclusive contract. Incorporating some of the more striking design touches of both Anton Furst (*Batman*) and Bo Welch (*Batman Returns*), her contributions ranged from models and miniatures (John Dykstra oversaw the film's approximately 200 visual FX shots, which include computer graphic effects) to the outside statuary at the Gotham

Charity Circus (realized by head sculptor Yarek Alfer from polyurethane foam) to the two-story Batcave and Wayne Manor sets built inside the mammoth geodesic dome in Long Beach, Calif., that once housed Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose.

Code-named "Blinko" at that site and others to keep the press at bay, *Batman Forever* didn't require a set as sprawling as Gotham Plaza in *Batman Returns*—the series' largest. Instead, it has 60 major sets (compared to Part Two's 20) that are designed to give the Bat-environs greater scale. For the first time, most Gotham City shots that are supposed to be exteriors *are* exteriors—captured on location in Los Angeles and in the real Gotham, New York City. According to an insider, an entire back alley was painted Day-Glo colors and black-lit, resembling "an LSD hallucination."

Ling also designed or redesigned the Bat transports, including the Batwing, the Batboat and the Batmobile. Kane got revved up when he first spied the new car. "It's more modernized, more futuristic," he says. "The skin of it is like a plastic and you can almost see through it. It's marvelous." Val Kilmer also thought the newly redesigned Batmobile was cool: "I asked [for] one, but no one has answered me yet."

Not so cool for Kilmer and Chris O'Donnell were costume designer Bob Ringwood's rubberized superhero suits, which lacked ventilation. O'Donnell hated wearing his glued-on mask the most. "It sweats, but it doesn't drip until you touch it—and then the sweat just kind of dribbles down. The makeup person's there trying to pad you, and you're just so miserable. I'd rather sit in the costume all day than have that mask on for an hour."

O'Donnell was nonetheless impressed by the craftsmanship of the *Batman Forever* costume shop, which he says is "the size of a grocery store. They really should do a documentary on it; it's unbelievable. I started going last July to get my entire body mold done—they poured plaster over my whole body, my head. Then I went in for other fittings. It was a slow process. When they finally put me in the costume six months later, I was like, Holy shit. It was scary."

Did O'Donnell's girlfriend, who videotaped the initial body casting, ask for a souvenir mold? "She wanted the codpiece," he says with a smirk. "I said, 'Don't worry about that, honey. You know that's just actual size. There's no padding involved there.'"

WINGING IT

There was no padding involved in O'Donnell's schedule, either. The studious performer completed a semester of college during the shoot—writing papers in his dressing trailer and attending classes at UCLA four

nights a week. "We'd wrap in Long Beach at seven, and then my class would start at 7:30. I had to rush up the 405 Freeway to get to UCLA, but I always showed up late; my teachers had no idea who I was. Before Christmas, with final exams, I'd be up all night writing papers, then getting up early and trying to fit in workouts. I was exhausted."

O'Donnell was awed by Kilmer's abundant energy and professionalism. "He's a real classically trained actor. He gets what he wants and he's happy with himself." But Batman's quiet speaking voice was, according to the younger thespian, occasionally problematic. "It was funny to be doing scenes with

Editorial, page 6). "Joel has a real hook on it. He pays more attention to the actors, where Tim pays more attention to the sets."

Kane also was impressed by Schumacher's on-set demeanor. "He's very accommodating, very extroverted, where Tim is more introverted. I was sitting right next to him for most of the shoot, and he good-naturedly called me a 'yenta'—which means someone who butts in all the time. All in all, it was a very happy shoot." A Warner Bros. source chimes: "Nobody's good humor ever flagged on this film."

Least of all the ringmaster's. But did he receive any moral support from producer

yard sequence of David Lean's classic 1946 adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*—a film that was highly influential on the filmmaker as a youth. The Gothic creepiness of the asylum set itself, perhaps, helped Schumacher stave off insanity as the magnitude of his two-year task dawned.

"When Bob Daly and Terry Semel came to me and said, 'We're prepared to offer you the corporation's largest asset,' they weren't being cute: The *Batman* movies have made almost a billion dollars [worldwide] and the merchandising has made over a billion. I had to take a lot of phone calls at home and while filming; somebody was always showing



TRUE LOVE: The Riddler courts a sleepy Clooney Meridian

Val, because if you were far away it was like, 'What? What was that?' You don't want to say anything because he's acting; you don't want to [affect] his concentration."

Nothing, it seems, could have jarred Joel Schumacher's concentration. "There's something puzzling about the way his mind works," says Akiva Goldsman, who lauds cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt and composer Elliot Goldenthal (replacing longtime Bat-musician Danny Elfman) for supporting and fortifying the director's vision. "All of the variables of what can be done—the range of motion for a character, for a scene and for the camera—operate simultaneously in Joel's head. Any adjustment that is necessary, and often takes other directors a tremendously long time, Joel just knows how to do the moment he walks in and looks."

"Candidly, I think he did as well as Tim Burton, if not better," says Bob Kane (see

and pal Burton? "Tim's always been a supporter of mine," says Schumacher, "though I didn't see him or speak to him much because he was working on *Ed Wood* and other projects. No, he wasn't calling me every day and saying, 'Go get 'em, Tiger!'"

"Tiger" got 'em just the same, bringing *Batman Forever* in on time and, incredibly, under budget. "I know, it's hard to believe," Schumacher says, stopping short of declaring, "There but for the grace of God go I" as he mulls the birth pangs of what likely will be his movie's main late-summer competitor, *Waterworld*. "We must owe them some karma. It seems like we got blessed and they got cursed. But the proof is in the pudding."

For Schumacher, the good-luck charm may have been the large tree that he had the prop department erect in front of the facade for Arkham Asylum. It's a gnarled wonder modeled after one that appears in the grave-

me something, 20 times a day that had to be approved. I'm not naive, but I had no idea that there were so many people involved with the merchandising and licensing—that just the concept of a new *Batman* movie [would result in] so much traveling and so many meetings. ..."

The director sighs. "Yeah," he amends, "I was naive."

Yet even weighing all of that, Schumacher remains true to unflappable form—preferring to think of *Batman Forever* as a grand adventure rather than his biggest career challenge. "I guess if you look at it logistically—the longest shooting schedule, the biggest budget, the largest sets, the most amount of sets—yeah, it was a huge challenge; I just didn't expect to have as much fun as I did making it. Now I'm hoping that fun will translate to you."

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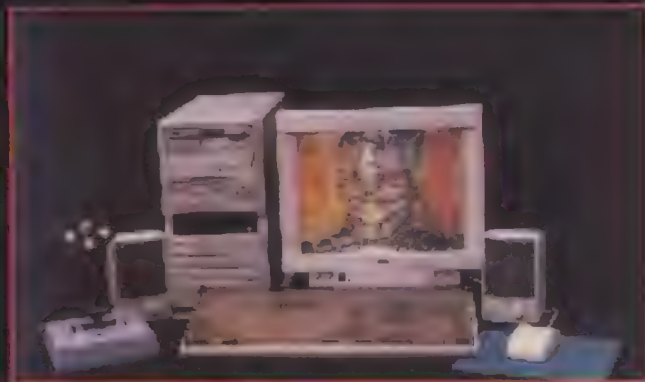
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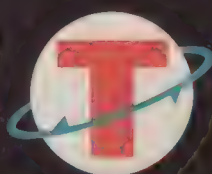




THE APOLLO CREED

Ron Howard's retelling of the *Apollo 13* moon mission brings real life to Hollywood's slate of summer blockbusters

by edward gross



Twenty-five years ago, the crew of the Apollo 13 waged a life-and-death struggle as their crippled spacecraft hurtled back toward Earth. This summer, director Ron Howard revisits that distressed mission, convinced that the real-life space adventure has all the thrills needed to keep up with expected box-office heavyweights like *Batman Forever*, *Judge Dredd* and *Casper*.

Howard, the director of *Splash*, *Cocoon* and *Backdraft*, among other hits, seems genuinely unperturbed by his muscle-bound competition. "It's a terrific adventure story," he says of *Apollo 13*. "All of us involved fell in love with the power of the story, and we placed a lot of trust in that. This is unlike a lot of big movies that have all the bells and whistles to pump up the experience and make it a ride. That can be wonderful stuff, but I decided to trust the story and not to build a lot of artifices and other things that would make it like every other movie. And the early feed-

back from screening audiences is that they're really appreciating that."

Howard clearly believes that moviegoers will be intrigued by a true story that can match the best of the blockbuster fiction for action and tension. "I'm not saying [audiences] don't want *Die Hard 3* to be as exciting as that film is probably going to be," Howard says. "But for this story, I think people appreciate the way we're able to use contemporary cinematic technique and technology not so much to make it flashier or dress it up, but instead to give the audience a sense of the actual experience. From a stylistic standpoint, I chose to give at least the appearance of being very austere. I wanted everything—from special effects to sound to cinematography—to service this great story. It's truly one of those instances in life when reality far surpasses what you could cook up. In fact, if I had put all of this into a work of pure fiction, I'd be hesitant because there are such surprising and odd coincidences, things that you'd be afraid to put in. But in this case, I was able to

TOGETHER AGAIN: A decade after collaborating on the fantasy hit *Splash*, Ron Howard and two-time Oscar winner Tom Hanks join forces for a real-life project

wholly embrace those things because they actually happened. It's a very interesting, powerful, emotional story."



he real-life story began about eight months after Neil Armstrong became the first man to put his foot on the moon's surface. The Apollo 13 craft, carrying astronauts Jim Lovell, Fred

and the event and how dangerous it was. It was, of course, dangerous on the successful missions, too, but here's one that went wrong. I think there's a lot of drama and a lot of suspense in seeing how little they had to work with when things did go wrong."

Interestingly, Howard compares the emotional appeal of *Apollo 13* to a good sports story. "You get to see human beings



Haise and Jack Swigert toward the moon, experienced an explosion that caused a tremendous loss of oxygen, power and guidance systems. Fearful of being locked in permanent lunar orbit, the crew—working together with Mission Control on Earth—had to turn around and limp back toward home in a craft that could not be heated, had little air and could very likely burn up during re-entry.

Howard believes that *Apollo 13*, which stars two-time Academy Award-winner Tom Hanks, along with Bill Paxton, Kevin Bacon, Ed Harris and Gary Sinise, should work for the moviegoing audience on a number of different levels.

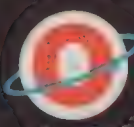
"First of all, people will be kind of amazed at both how primitive our technology was 25 years ago and that we were nonetheless still able to go into space," he says. "This is played out in the movie in all kinds of ways. On a basic level, I think people are a little bit amazed by the story

rally together, and I think that's very uplifting," he says. "Then there are the characters themselves. We didn't go for mythic figures in space; these are human beings. It's hard to call these guys 'everymen,' because they're pretty extraordinary in a lot of ways. In a lot of other ways, though, they're exactly like you and me. But if you see a documentary about the space program, you don't get inside the people very easily. They're not the kind of people who open up readily. So I think we have a couple of advantages in telling the story in a theatrical presentation. One of them is that we can show what it was like when they weren't talking on the horn. We can try to give people the impression of what they might have been feeling and going through in the capsule. I thought that my job was to try to offer some insight into what it was like to go through something as intense and terrifying and stressful as what these people

went through. All of the research, all of the soul searching the actors did themselves, was about that."

Effusive about the contributions of all the film's actors, Howard still feels compelled to single out Tom Hanks, with whom he had worked on *Splash* more than 10 years ago.

"I don't know if anybody can still be surprised by what Tom Hanks does," muses Howard, "but he really does make a great commander. Our relationship hasn't changed that much between *Splash* and *Apollo 13*. He struck me back then as being incredibly relaxed yet with great concentration. The one thing I notice now is that he trusts his instincts even more. During the filming of *Splash*, he tossed some ad libs in there, which, in the throes of making the movie, I thought were just okay but not a big deal. Then we started cutting the movie together and showing it to audiences, and a lot of these little throwaways and ad libs wound up getting terrific audience reaction. I told myself, 'If I get a chance to direct this guy again, I'm going to lean on him to participate more.' On *Apollo 13* I really went out of my way to make him a collaborator. Of course, he had a wealth of information about the space program. I think he's a really fine artist, very imaginative, and a wonderful person to be in business with."

ne undeniably appealing aspect of the film for sci-fi fans will be the detailed look at the Apollo spacecrafts, which should especially fascinate hardware junkies weaned on *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*. Howard compares these capsules to the ships that took the Vikings on their journeys a thousand years ago, ships that, he points out, were about the size of "an apartment living room."

"You think of the Vikings as powerful, mythic figures," he says, "We forget that they were a bunch of real people risking everything to try to make a discovery and accomplish something. Our space program in the '60s was not so different. So it is interesting to see just how they did it, how it worked. I don't want to make it seem as though the movie is a documentary, but we took great pains to be as authentic as we could be, while taking just as many pains to present the story in as exciting and accessible a way as possible."

A key sequence that the director expects will be as exciting as anything seen on movie screens this year has Hanks, as Lovell, flying the spacecraft manually while the computer is shut down. "Tom and I started wondering, 'How do you show people that doing something manually, without the computer, is actually very scary and dangerous?'" Howard says. "You've always seen Luke

Skywalker grab the stick and fly around space like some kind of video-game jockey. We ask the audience to understand the real process of going to the moon. What's really interesting about it, when you listen to the focus groups at the test screenings talk about it, is I could tell they were getting a lot of satisfaction out of the fact that they do get it. The fact that the audience follows *Star Trek* and loves the show *ER*, with all of its medical jargon, is a very clear indication that you



An important part of the story to Howard is how the country quickly became apathetic about the space program after the giddiness of the first moon mission wore off. It took a near-fatal mishap to bring people's attention back.

"It's difficult to maintain people's interest," the director says. "For example, the last couple of days I've been using a fiber-optic system to do sound recording work with the actors in a studio in Los



don't have to play down to audiences. The audience doesn't mind listening, following and learning a new kind of jargon, as long as it's interesting. Before all the realistic police shows came on TV 10 or 12 years ago, all that cop lingo seemed kind of odd and very cool. We've been able to utilize the language of the space program in a similar way."

LOST IN SPACE? As Kevin Bacon and Tom Hanks (above) contemplate eternal space travel, Ed Harris leads the Earth-bound effort to save the astronauts



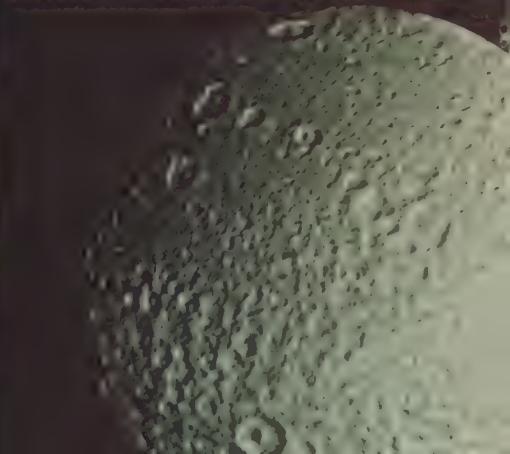
Angeles and I'm in an editing room in Connecticut. The first day it was a marvel. I thought, 'Isn't this incredible? What a breakthrough.' The second day, everyone took it completely for granted and we started to get impatient with little weaknesses in the system. I think that's the kind of thing that happened with the space program. 'Go to the moon? We can go? Great! Now what?' Human beings are always about the 'now what.' Once one goal is reached, it's then a little hard to galvanize support for continuing."

Gaining support for the original moon mission was aided, Howard points out, by the Cold War, a motivation for action and ingenuity that is clearly missing today. "The Apollo program was really about fighting the Russians," the director says. "A lot of people don't realize that that's really what the push was about. Fear of Soviet advances in science was motivating us to spend that money. With the moon landing, America made an important symbolic leap ahead of the Soviet Union. We just don't have that kind of psychological push anymore."

Getting on what he calls his "soap box," Howard says he fears that our reasons for action have to be stark—such as beating the Soviets—to gain support for big projects like the space program. Using the country's educational system as an example, he says: "As much as we say we care about it, when push comes to shove there are other things that demand our attention. But, if 10 years from now every kid in this country had to pass an exam or there would be a revolution or another country would take over or something, education would become our number-one priority. We'd pull out all the stops. That seems to be, sadly, what we need to really motivate us. I really don't know what's going to get us excited about going to Mars."

Well, more films like *Apollo 13* probably wouldn't hurt. ♦

HOWARD'S END: With films like *Cocoon*, *Backdraft* and *The Paper*, the former child actor has become one of the most successful directors in Hollywood



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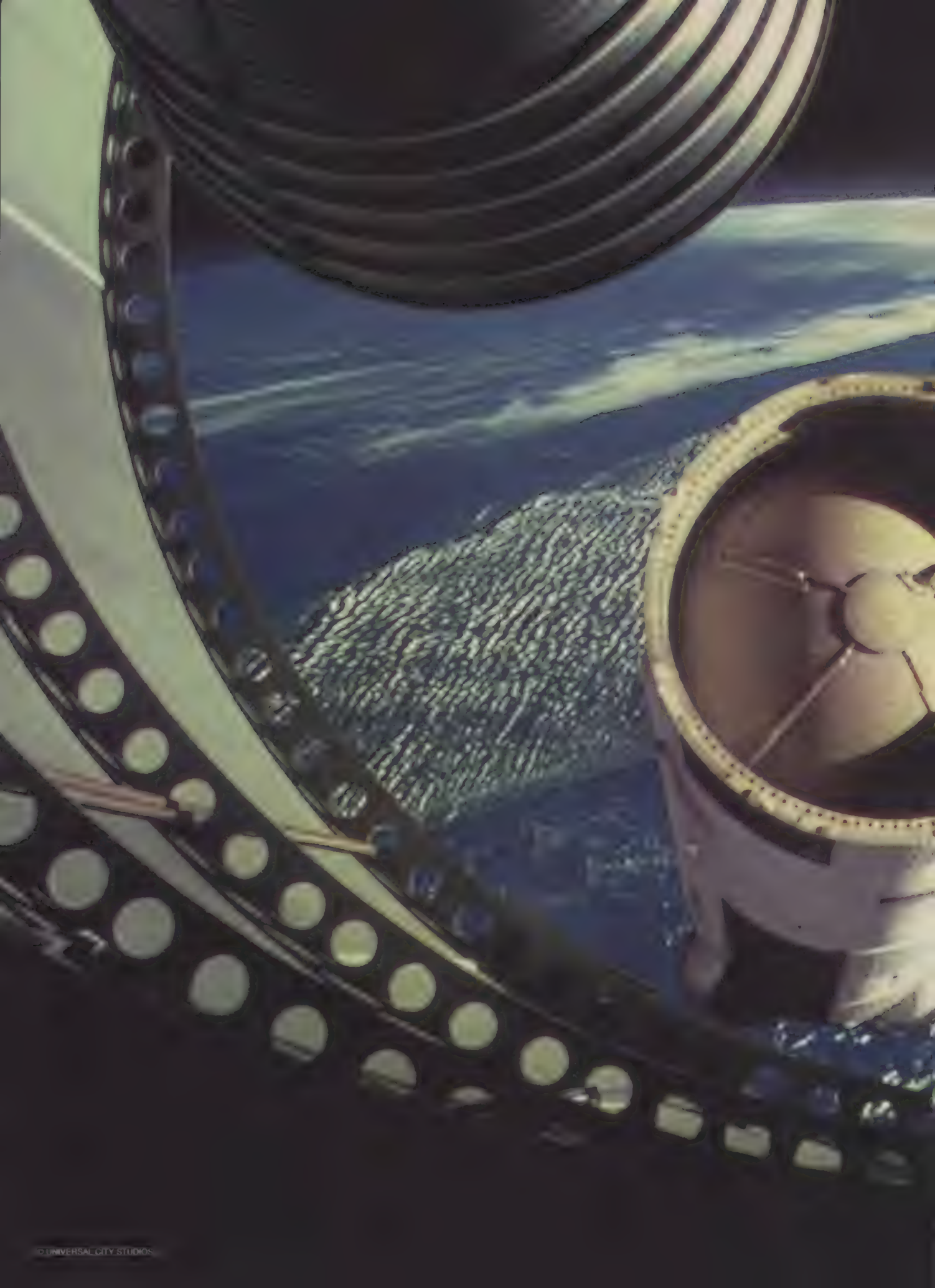
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THE REAL STUFF

Using computer wizardry and old-fashioned model work, Digital Domain takes us back to one of NASA's most perilous moments in space

by Ron Magid

When Ron Howard was in the early stages of planning his tale of Apollo 13's courageous real-life astronauts and their jinxed moon shot, he began his search for an effects house that could recreate the stirring visuals of the actual launch. But finding an outfit that could successfully follow in the particle wake of effects landmarks like *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Right Stuff* was a tough nut, since *2001*'s primitive optical techniques (without the benefit of computerized motion control!) and *The Right Stuff*'s high-speed, in-camera miniature effects yielded virtually unbeatable

results. At last, Howard settled on the newly minted effects powerhouse Digital Domain, which had garnered in its first year a Grammy Award (visual FX for the Rolling Stones' "Love Is Strong") and an Oscar nomination (for *True Lies*). But could the creative team that subtly enhanced *Interview With the Vampire*'s gothic naturalism pull off an eye-popping—and realistic—outer-space epic?

The answer is a resounding "Yes." Using traditional motion-control miniature work and pioneering new advances in computer graphics (CG) and digital compositing, Apollo 13's visual effects supervisor, Rob Legato, along with digital effects supervisors Karen Goulekas, Mark Lasoff and John McLaughlin, digital effects art

director Kevin Mack, compositing supervisors Mike Kanfer and Price Pethel (and about 40 digital artists), created out-of-this-world imagery that rivals the best work ever achieved in dramatic film.

As he was finishing his effects work for *Interview With the Vampire*, (his feature film debut, having previously helmed visuals for TV's *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), Legato began conferring with Ron Howard about re-creating the Apollo 13 launch, which they agreed was the

live-action footage, which didn't have a documentary feel at all.

About a month and a half before filming began, and before any of the miniatures were even built, Legato went on a location scout with Howard to Cape Canaveral, Fla. He was immediately struck by the enormous scale of everything connected with the space program, and was determined to apply this awesome new dimension to his effects shots. Legato's experience at Cape Canaveral totally

ture into those plates, because the sum total of those type of shots would show the audience they were in Cape Canaveral. Then, when we got into the real tight close-ups on the oversized engine valves and gantry miniatures we shot on stage, the [audience] would be sold."

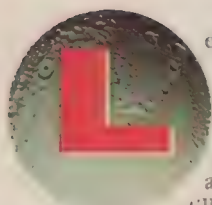
But how was he going to do those shots on time and on budget? Digital Domain hadn't bid to create any large-scale landscape miniatures, and there were other problems with the location that



toughest effects challenge. Originally, Howard suggested capturing the washed-out look of the original military photography. Consequently, Legato planned a *Forrest Gump*-style blend of actors and miniatures with shots of an actual launch. But when they went looking for stock footage, Howard and Legato found there was no consistent or complete set from the Apollo 13 launch, or even one similar to it; instead, they encountered multiple formats and frame rates. But the issue was moot once Legato saw some of Dean Cundey's

changed his approach to *Apollo 13*'s launch sequence. "Our original storyboards didn't show the landscape quite so much," Legato remembers. "Our effects shots consisted basically of close-ups. But when I was near the launch pad, I saw these awe-inspiring low angles that were not represented in any stock footage. And I realized it was views like that, rather than shots from a mile away, that you realize, 'Holy Christ, look how big it is!' Suddenly, I wanted to open those shots up, shoot the real locations, and matte our rocket minia-

Legato and Howard hadn't counted on. "Because this is a period film, a lot of the stuff just doesn't exist quite the same way as it did then," Legato explains. "The space shuttle gantry is now in the way of the launch pad; we can't get around that, so how do we fix it?" Legato knew if he did a locked-off shot of the launch pad, he could then enhance it with miniatures and computer graphics at Digital Domain — only he didn't want to shoot everything static; he wanted to fill the launch sequence with moving, dynamic shots.



Legato decided to use a technique he had pioneered for *Interview With the Vampire*, where he had scanned a series of overlapping

stills of a miniature of Pompeii into his computer, like location photographs, then blended the seams in Photoshop. Then he created an artificial pan across the miniature and combined that with a real, motion-control pan to

in two days with a live-action camera and no motion control," Legato says.

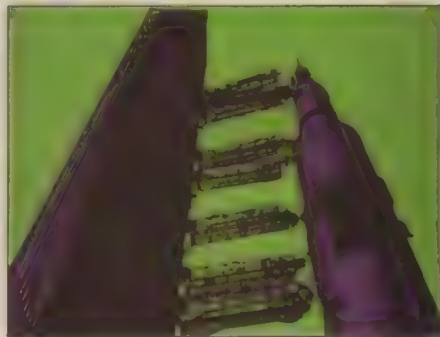
He then brought the footage back to Digital Domain, where it was made period-perfect via Pan-and-Tile with software written by Bill Spitzak and 3-D texture mapping. "Because we used a series of stills to create our Pan-and-Tile plate, we could actually direct the background in the computer, get rid of that gantry and put in a new sky as if the shot wasn't moving," Legato says. "We just painted out all the antennas and things

shots to various 1/8-scale, oversized miniatures for insert shots in the complex launch sequence. But for most of the launch sequence cuts, Legato shot McClung and Ecker's 18-foot Saturn V rocket and 20-foot gantry miniatures on their side to match the artificial camera moves in his Pan-and-Tile background plates.

As he began assembling his effects elements, Legato became fascinated by *Apollo 13*'s story arc, and wanted his effects shots to reflect the film's moods as it followed the



READY FOR BLASTOFF: Using green-screen, Digital Domain placed actors (left) and real backgrounds (right) with carefully detailed miniatures. Low-angle photography and close-ups, meanwhile, conveyed the incredible size of the rockets



Brad Pitt in a boat, which in turn was linked to another motion-control move of Pitt in a hotel room. Legato dubbed the process Pan-and-Tile, because scrolling back and forth across the composite computer image looked identical to a cinematic pan. Legato saw the process as the crucial first step in allowing filmmakers to combine actors with miniature or CG sets, not realizing that it would have its most profound impact to date combining miniatures with real locations for *Apollo 13*. "I was able to shoot every plate in the movie

we didn't want and replaced them with sky landscape or whatever was needed."

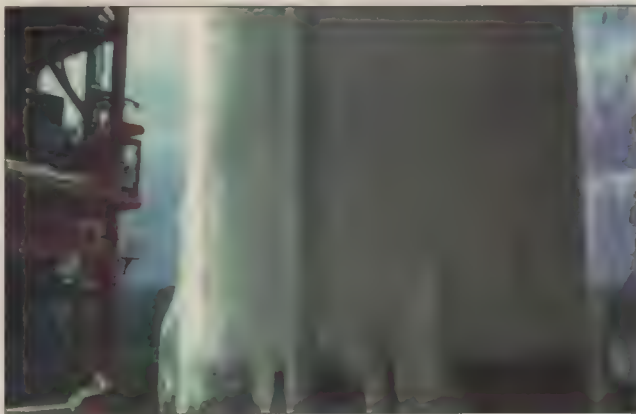
Meanwhile, a team of modelmakers, headed by Pat McClung and Leslie Ecker, built an entire NASA space fleet in miniature. The largest models were the 1/4-scale Command Module and Lunar Module (LEM), which were constructed of wood, then covered with a thin skin of metal sheeting. As for the Saturn V itself, McClung and Ecker used everything from a 1/100-scale, four-foot-tall store-bought modelkit of the Saturn V rocket for long

astronauts from their Cape Canaveral launch to heart-pounding re-entry and splashdown. Legato took a unique approach, breaking the effects sequences into three acts and varying his approach in each act to complement the dramatic needs of the film. "That way, there was a story to direct in terms of how the ships moved from act to act," Legato explains. "The first act is the heroic, majestic launch; that is followed by the more ethereal, understated trip to the moon, which I labeled 'the Lunar Ballet'; then the oxygen explosion where all hell

breaks loose, where the camera becomes this rolling frenetic thing inside the capsule and out. It might be all in my head and not up on the screen, but it did give me a point of departure. And it made my job fun."

Along with making the launch sequence both majestic and absolutely real, Howard and Legato also wanted to make it exciting. The director hit on the idea of using a series of Scorsese-style staccato cuts and lots of coverage to send both the astronauts and audiences into orbit. Using a combination of 1/20-scale motion-control miniatures of the Saturn V and gantry and 1/8-scale, practical insert sections, Legato was able to give the launch the same explosive energy of the pool breaks in *The Color of Money*. "Scorsese used four-frame double cuts each time a pool cue hit a ball," Legato observes. "The cue clearly hits the ball, then the next cut Scorsese backed up the same action and let the cue hit the ball again. But when it's cut together it just looks like—Bam!—one move. I thought that was really cool, and that's how we made the launch seem even more explosive than it was in reality. We had very tight close-ups of engines firing from three angles, which is cut so tightly you won't perceive it as repetitive action."

About 25 of *Apollo 13*'s 125 effects shots were devoted to the launch itself. One of Legato's favorite shots is a low angle of the rocket engines firing just above the flame trench, a concrete receptacle under the launch pad where flame and gas from the rocket escape. Suddenly, a fireball erupts from the rocket, billowing straight toward camera, engulfing it in an inferno. The cameraman is clearly toast! "That angle wasn't represented in any stock footage because you can't shoot there—if you did, you'd burn up!" Legato says with a laugh. "But when I was [at Cape Canaveral], I found the flame trench very awe-inspiring. The engineering of the Saturn V required a big shelf to put the rocket on so all this stuff can erupt out underneath, so how big did they make it? 70 feet tall! The scale of everything gets to be enormous, and as I was sitting there I thought, Wouldn't it be cool to put a camera there? So I decided as long as I was there, I'd shoot it and show Ron [Howard], and if he liked it we'd do the shot."



ICE CAPADES: Filled with frozen gas, the Apollo rockets would form ice on their outer shells. "When the rockets began vibrating, the ice would fall off. Something about that struck me as kind of elegant."



hat director could resist frying a cinematographer at the climax of his ignition sequence? With

Howard's blessing, Legato turned over his flame trench shot to artist Martha Snow Mack, who removed the space shuttle from the launch pad and added period elements. But that was only the beginning. By the time Digital Domain's artists finished with this shot, the only real elements remaining were the concrete trench, the massive water pipes and a lightpole.

"Here's a picture where everything was practically shot, but it's a complete fabrication—it doesn't exist in reality," says digital artist Adam Stark, the painter responsible for many of *Interview With the Vampire*'s effects. "To create the erupting fireball, we built a huge, black, 1/4-scale model of the flame trench in our parking lot. Joe Viskocil [the man who blew up the Death Star] handled the pyro. Both the rocket ignition lighting up the inside of the trench with a fireball, as well as the explosion that engulfs the camera, were shot on that same black model, which exploded to smithereens several times and set off car alarms for miles. It was really fun!"

After the rocket and gantry miniatures were shot on stage by visual effects director of photography Erik Nash, the flame trench was handed off to compositing supervisors Mike Kanfer and Price Pethel, who shepherded the shot through about a dozen computer workstations where additional elements were incorporated: CG gas condensation and ice were created by Dennis Blakey and Robert Small, Martha Mack painted reflected clouds in pooled water on the concrete floor, and David Isyomin created a water element that sprayed into the trench. The entire shot was assembled by Stark, who positioned, rotated and scaled every element so it fit into a seamless eruption of fire, water and steam: "I had Dave's water spray in, creating the steam element. As

the smoke fills the frame, I added the fireball explosion behind it. Then, when the explosion came out of the smoke, I added interactive lighting to the pipes and the gantry, and a hot reflection in the concrete floor, which made for a beautiful look. As the fireball engulfs the camera, I transi-

tioned to that actual fire element 100 percent, filling the whole frame. The last thing added was a digital camera shake that was created by Simon O'Connor and Mark Lasoff, which created the final bit of realism to a cool shot."

But where there was fire, Legato also created a cool contrast with ice. As the rocket tears away from the launch pad, huge chunks of ice crack, break off and fall to Earth, giving the shots tremendous power. Sequence supervisor Dennis Blakey created the ice using his own custom software to bring an astounding level of realism to these shots. "The rocket's basically a canister of frozen gas, and in Florida, humidity would attach to its sides and freeze," Legato explains. "When the rocket began vibrating, the ice would fall off. Something about that struck me as kind of elegant, so we created this phenomena that gave us another thing to see and a way to demonstrate the vibration and other activity of the rocket as it launched, which looked cool."

Once the Saturn V left Earth's atmosphere, you'd think it would be easier to composite the 1/20-scale rocket into the blackness of space, and you'd be right—once the Digital Domain team defined what that space looked like. They were after far more than the digital equivalent of shooting a negative of black paint flicked on a white board, or punching pinholes in velvet. "We wanted to capture the romantic quality of the pristine clarity of space," offers compositing supervisor Price Pethel. "Our technical advisor, astronaut Dave Scott, was very poetic about that experience—the feeling, color and majesty of space—and we were led by his vision."

Capturing that look accurately using digital technology required weeks of experimentation. John McLaughlin obtained a star position database from NASA, which he then converted and enhanced into a 3-D database. Judith Crow and Dan Janowski then implemented an automated star-request system that generated 3-D stars based on motion-control data from the stage. Mark Lasoff and Mike Kanfer ran several tests with Deluxe, the same lab that was going to do the actual release prints. "Ron Howard and Rob [Legato] didn't want the stars to look the way you're used to seeing them in science fiction," says Kanfer. "Every astronaut will tell you that the darkest black you can imagine is in outer space, and then there's the contrasting brightness of the stars. So we went for the darkest black possible without crushing the shadow detail on our miniatures. Generating the stars digitally required very sensitive adjustments so they didn't look too big, or disappear altogether. To reach that threshold of blackness and create point light sources coming from such small areas, just a couple of pixels, was like walking the edge of a razor."

While Legato was constrained by the



Earth's gravity during the launch sequence, he devised the second of his three effects acts to take advantage of the weightless environment of space. There, where the notion of up and down is virtually irrelevant, he added a roll to almost every shot of the Lunar Ballet. Its most poetic use is in a long shot of the Saturn V, like an arrow shooting toward the moon the astronauts would never land on, a perfect bull's-eye at center frame. But gently rolling the entire shot wasn't just an artistic choice; there was a certain necessity to it as well. "In space, we don't have any left or right or up or down to compose with," Legato explains. "Since every shot was composed for wide screen, the Saturn V rocket became this

16mm camera NASA put in the capsule ring," Legato says. "The camera, which was jettisoned along with the first stage and the whole ring connection, had a little parachute attached and that's how that film got to Earth. The producers wanted me to recreate that original shot exactly, but I wanted to do something different to take the curse off of just making it look like the stock shot. I just kept thinking, 'If I were to really shoot this, what would I do?' and hoped not to go so far overboard that it became an obvious miniature shot. So as the stage fell away, I added a little pullback to reveal the interior of the ring and the Earth below, which I hoped would make the shot absolutely awe-inspiring."

toward the Earth."

The shot that follows is a reverse angle shooting up at the bottom of the rocket as the first stage tumbles away and the thrusters on the second stage fire and the ship blasts away at tremendous speed. The CG pyro elements were created by Neville Spiteri, while the composite was handled by artist Mark Forker. Forker also composited a strangely haunting shot that answers the much-asked question: How do astronauts dispose of their bodily space waste? "I did this shot showing the urine spilling into space," Forker grins. "There's a lot of detail in that shot: I created a CG crystallized element coming out of the capsule that was also rephotographed to give it some glow,

"We took great pains to be as authentic as we could be, while taking just as many pains to present the story in as exciting and accessible a way as possible."

- Director Ron Howard

stick shooting through the middle of this black horizontal frame, which made it difficult to get really nice compositions. We ended up with what amounted to a pencil in a frame, which was a bit of a problem at first, until we realized we could take advantage of that liability by adding roll to those shots to find the optimum composition. I first got the idea from the weightless tests Ron did early on for the movie. If the actors went sideways, Dean Cundey actually rolled his camera to follow their movements, which looked correct in this weightless environment. So I thought I'd try that, which helped with the problem of composing an interesting move when you're shooting a pencil, and [it] added a lot of life and a whole new dynamic to those space shots that I hadn't really seen before."

Another exquisite shot shows the separation of the first stage of the rocket as photographed from inside the Saturn V's second stage cylinder. "The idea was to replicate that famous shot, which was taken by a

The concept was brilliant, but the process that made the shot look just the way we remember it—only clearer, more majestic—was painful. Erik Nash shot the models of the two rocket stages as separate greenscreen elements. There's a second of black at the head of the shot for drama, then the explosive bolts fire, generating sparks as the stages separate. Vapor escaping from inside the rocket into space was added with a ring of liquid nitrogen. Karen Goulekas used a particle system to produce the debris from the exploding bolts flying into space, while Neville Spiteri created CG pyro elements to create the effect of unburnt fuel igniting in zero gravity along with thrusters firing outside the rocket on top of the first stage falling away. Adam Stark, who composited the shot, says: "The trick was balancing everything to make the ships look the right color and make the fire look real as we are pulling back inside the rocket, which created a freefalling momentum as the first stage dropped away

and I added the reflections of the crystals into the capsule windows. We called it the 'piss shot' but it's actually quite beautiful as the urine explodes into space."



But an explosion of another kind was waiting to rock the Apollo 13 capsule. The actual disaster in space, where the compressed oxygen tanks in the service module rupture, was achieved using a full-sized "miniature." "We built a 1:1 section of the capsule for the scene where the rivets pop and the gas that's built up blows out through the hole," Legato says. "It needed to be that big so we didn't have to worry about the scale of the gas. We built a hydraulic ram inside to push up against the physical mass of the capsule skin. We used fire extinguishers to simulate the oxygen that was building up

pressure inside, just waiting to shoot out into space when the skin ruptured."

Andrew DiGenova created and animated computer-generated rivets popping out of their holes at the moment of explosion.

As the service module breaks apart, several panels fly off, and thousands of bits of mylar insulation that lined the service module blow out into space. "The gag was to see this explosion happen," Pethel says. "It wasn't a fiery explosion so much as a fast outgassing of oxygen that tore the side of the ship open, as all these mylar particles spun out into space. Unlike an explosion in our atmosphere, explosions in space are isotropic. So in this case, the mylar particles and gas formed a shroud that travelled

began assuming absurd dimensions, particularly when the 1/4-scale Command Module and LEM were linked. Suddenly, Digital Domain saw the size and scale of its equipment escalate exponentially, beginning with the modelmover. "Although big models are nice to look at, they're a bitch to shoot," Legato says. "When the LEM and capsule were attached, the model measured 14 feet long, and our ordinary modelmover just wasn't big enough to support that weight and torque when the ships revolved. Our model department built a rig from scratch and engineered a ring in the middle of the mover. That ring attached to a little gear that spun against a bearing so this huge model would be supported as it rotated. The chain

era while shooting fire so it still feels like fire but it looks like something else. I kept undercranking my shots further and further to about four frames per second, and suddenly the flame had this kind of ion storm look, which is what we used to create the feeling that the capsule's heating up."

"The capsule model, which was covered with dirt and burn streaks, was shot motion control, forcing gas out its base," Price Pethel adds. "Pyro whiz Joe Viskocil created a wonderful fire element that traveled around the capsule base. Then he blew the flames with a fan so the gas wrapped around the edge of the shield and engulfed the whole model in flame, so the capsule really looked like it was burning up as it was re-



around the moon with the ship as the astronauts turned on all the thruster rockets to try to steer it back. Everything was CG except for the model itself: the gas, the mylar particles and the thruster fire. The challenge was to create images we know have never been seen: There's no reference, so we're just extrapolating and creating what we think it might've looked like while being as accurate as we can. At the same time, we took some licenses for moviemaking—it had to be exciting. It's a tragically beautiful scene, as all these little mylar bits are hit by the sun."

The final and most violent of Legato's three-act effects structure largely centered on the Apollo 13 Command Capsule and Lunar Module (LEM). This extended sequence employed very large, 1/4-scale miniatures constructed of wood covered with a thin skin of metal sheeting.

Unfortunately, the reflectivity of the models' surfaces created compositing problems, while moving the massive things on Digital Domain's motion-control stage

that drove the modelmover was really amusing—it looked like part of some giant bicycle. As big as it was, when this heavy, 14-foot-long model was hanging out off the modelmover and we tried to do a barrel roll or other moves, it sometimes went out of control and broke because it was so massive. Getting the model to move wasn't the problem, but getting it to stop broke the work gear even when it was going at two frames a second, which is very slight. It took a lot of work to fix that thing."

Another large-scale capsule model, this one with its own self-heating shield, was the star performer in the terrifying re-entry sequence, where the astronauts jerry-rig a heat shield and pray they wouldn't burn up in the Earth's atmosphere. "I wanted our re-entry to be a little more realistic looking than the one in *The Right Stuff*," Legato says. "That was very cool for the time, but where they shot liquid nitrogen and shook the camera a lot, I wanted to shoot real fire. There's a method of undercranking the cam-

entering the atmosphere. Then we added glow passes to make the model look like it's heating up and glowing cherry red. Some of that will be augmented by CG vapor."

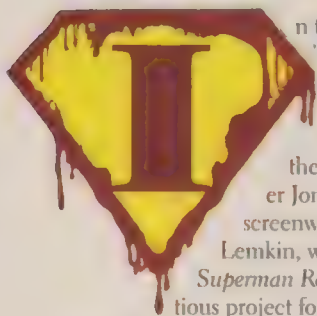
And perhaps some puffs from a fire extinguisher, too—properly scaled, of course. "That's the whole joke of this show," Legato says with a laugh. "NASA had three rockets firing in a 400-foot Saturn V and all this force and power, but to really get that image on film you'd have to build a billion-dollar rocket! Instead, we tried to re-create that billion-dollar launch using fire extinguishers and overcranking and shooting very specific angles. Every once in a while, when we started feeling pretty good about what we were doing, we'd look at the real stuff and just shake our heads!"

Maybe Legato and his fellow perfectionists at Digital Domain are still disappointed when comparing their handiwork with the actual NASA launches, but moviegoers are likely to be shaking their heads in wonderment. ♦

SUPERMAN REBORN

Leaving the Christopher Reeve franchise in the past, Warner Bros. creates a new Man of Steel

By Edward Gross



In the summer of '96, you'll believe once again that a man can fly.

At least that's the hope of producer Jon Peters and screenwriter Jonathan Lemkin, who are prepping *Superman Reborn*, an ambitious project for Warner Bros. that seeks to redefine the Superman mythology for a new generation of moviegoers.

Peters, of course, is the proverbial 800-pound Hollywood gorilla who, after a brief stint with former partner Peter Guber as the head of Columbia Pictures for Sony, has returned to the studio that essentially made him a star. It was Peters who guided the first two *Batman* films through production, so, as Lemkin points out, "He knows this genre. The brilliant thing about Jon is that he comes up with 15 ideas in any sentence. He is a constant fount of ideas.

and probably has more ideas in a single day than most producers have in a year."

Lemkin, for his part, was a studio rewriter under contract at Warner, whose credits include work

on *Demolition Man* and this summer's *Under Siege 2: Dark Territory*. Additionally, he has developed the on-again/off-again adaptation of *Devil's Advocate*—in which a lawyer literally goes to work for the devil—and wrote the screenplay for *Lethal Weapon 4*, which may or may not go into production some time in the near future.

"I think based on the action of *Lethal Weapon 4*, some of the more supernatural elements of *Devil's Advocate* and the fantasy elements of *Demolition Man*, everyone felt comfortable about going forward with me as

the writer of *Superman Reborn*," he says. Which is not to say that the project was assigned lightly, as evidenced by the fact that he and Peters actually had to present their proposed storyline to Warner's CEOs.

"That just doesn't happen," Lemkin says with a laugh. "Let's face it, I've been entrusted with this corporate asset, and it's a very different process than any other script I've ever worked on. This is a *huge* corporate asset, and if you look at the marketing that can come from this, it's phenomenal. There are 98 *Batman* action figures. Ninety-eight!



EXCLUSIVE



Can you imagine? So they're being very careful with what we do."

More careful, one hopes, than the makers of the Christopher Reeve franchise. Although Richard Donner's original film is deemed a modern classic by many critics, quality diminished rapidly with each subsequent entry, hitting bottom with Cannon Films' disastrous *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*. A fifth film, *Superman: The New Movie*, which had the Man of Steel going up against the city-shrinking android Brainiac, never got off the ground. But in

spite of the franchise's shaky reputation, Lemkin doesn't believe *Superman Reborn* has to worry about being stigmatized as the latest Super-embarrassment.

"It's been 17 years since the first Superman film," he says. "The audience that is going to see this movie certainly wasn't alive then. I think what we're looking at is: How do you bring Superman into the '90s and keep him fresh? The good thing about Superman is that he wants to do the right thing. He's *not* a conflicted hero, which is its own genre and can be a wonderful thing. There's something about Superman that's great in terms of his attitude of stepping into the breach, come what may. The timing for this movie just feels right.

"You have to remember that the biggest difference between Batman and Superman is that Batman is human," he adds. "Superman came from another planet; he demands fantasy elements that Batman

says—he does admit that the comic-book scenario featuring the death and rebirth of Superman is a good "stepping-off point" for *Superman Reborn*. So, one can look upon the title of the film as having a double meaning—first, that it heralds the filmmakers' intention to redefine the character for modern audiences, and, second, that we will indeed witness the Man of Steel's demise and resurrection.

"In any good Superman movie," Lemkin says, side-stepping specifics while admitting that the film's villain is *not* Doomsday, "the fate of the whole planet should be at stake. The truth of the matter is that you've got to treat the legend with respect and at the same time put enough of a spin on it so that it's not something that people have seen before. That's a hard thing to do. It's really easy, on the other hand, to get arch and coy, which is the last thing you want to do. Taking Superman



director Richard Lester, who helmed the second and third films in the series, believes that

Superman II in particular achieved this goal, as the Man of Steel went up against three super-powered Kryptonian villains. Yet despite all of the technical aspects of that movie including a midair battle between the characters—there was a very human core to the film.

"I think you have to work hard at that," says Lester. "My theory is that in a film that's very technical, it is important to always have a sequence, especially after a very special effects-heavy scene, where two actors can work easily and naturally together. Where they don't have to stand on a particular spot and have a cable up their backside, so you can have a naturalistic character/actor scene before you go zooming off into another tech-



FLYING HIGH: *Superman Reborn* will likely bring back alien villains such as those in the original *Superman* (above, with Brando), but not Reeve (facing page)

doesn't. I think that's much more exciting, and I feel that the result should be sort of like crossing Batman with *Star Wars*. Superman versus humans is not an interesting match. That's like me versus a slug. Who cares?"

Although Lemkin cannot discuss the plot of the film—under threat of death, he

seriously is sometimes hard, but that's what we've got to do. You've got to have villains whose powers and abilities *demand* that Superman—and only Superman—can be the one who stops them. Their powers have to tax Superman to the limit. That's the only way to make the movie exciting and a dramatic challenge."

nical—and therefore slightly stiff—sequence. We tried to make sure that we wrote sequences where the actors could get their teeth into something that had a little bit of reality about it."

Lemkin agrees, adding, "All the big myths are really about small truths and human moments. If you go out to slay a



dragon, it's because your own hearth and home have been threatened."

In comparing a standard, big-budget action film with the adventures of Superman, Lemkin emphasizes that in an action film, the characters take out guns and shoot each other or chase each other in cars. "In a Superman movie," he says, "every bit of action has to be thought out. If you punch somebody in a normal movie, they fall down. If Superman punches somebody, you have to figure out what effect that punch will have in terms of Superman. We're also hoping to present a more human-like Superman than you've ever seen before. Everything will be fresh in this movie."

Some 20 years ago when they were writing the scripts for the first three Superman films, screenwriters David and Leslie Newman assumed that burden, and tried to focus on the mythological aspects of the character.

"Superman is one of the basic American legends," offers Leslie Newman.

"David's always said that it was our King Arthur. People asked why we were doing a movie about a comic hero, but nobody thinks it's odd to do a movie or musical about King Arthur or Robin Hood. Superman isn't just a comic; it's a myth and it contains elements of so many of the basic myths. The god who walks among men."

"The notion of a god who walks among men disguised as a man occurs in every mythology," interjects David Newman, "and there are biblical connotations in this legend as well: A father who says, 'I will send my only son to Earth to save mankind.' We all know where we've heard that story before. It has such resonance."

Writer Mark Rosenthal, who co-wrote the script with Lawrence Konner for

Superman IV, adds: "Superman is a fascinating character and not just for the obvious story reasons, but for who he is and why. If you look at every culture since the beginning of time, you'll find that each one has some kind of a superhero in its mythology. Superman fits in with what America is and why we are what we are. What's great about Superman, as well as all the equivalent myths, is the issue of why doesn't the god step in and make everything right? That has always been one of the real core fascinations with the character."

Lemkin admits that Superman's religious connotations are not lost on him, and neither are the ramifications of this god among men dying and then returning.

"There are more than just religious over-

tones dealing with death and resurrection, it's a whole damn chord," smiles Lemkin. "Christ, the Phoenix and I'm sure another dozen Norse legends apply. The comics went even further with this recently, with a cult outside of Superman's grave carrying signs that he would rise again. However, movies are a far more targetable bit of mass media, so I think we're going to have to tread a bit more carefully. Nonetheless, I'm sure we will enrage somebody."

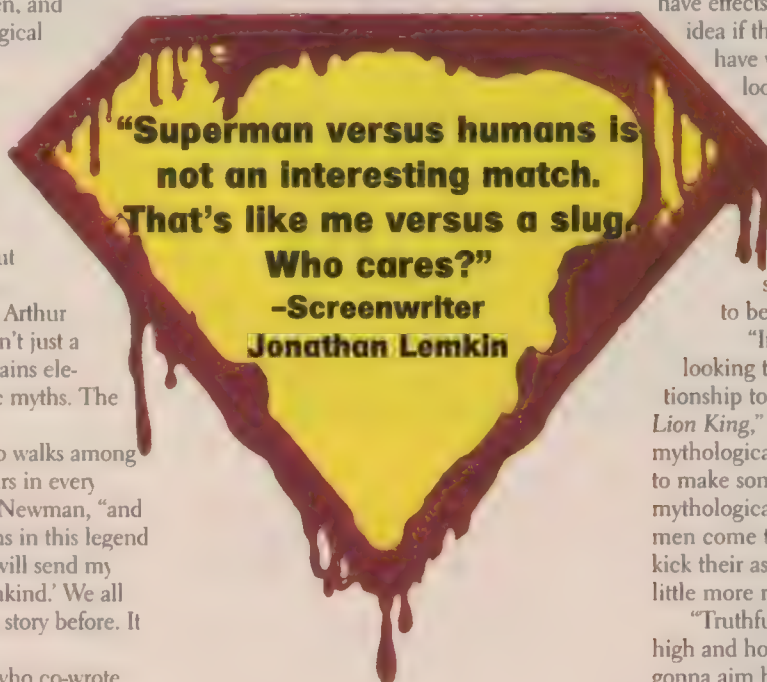
An additional challenge in the writing of *Superman Reborn* is figuring out exactly what is and what is not possible in terms of special effects.

"I'm sure we're going to be pushing computer technology to the limits, and they'll probably be inventing things the day before we're shooting it," Lemkin offers. "We have effects in the script which we have no idea if they're physically possible. We have written a lot of stuff where we all look at each other and say, 'Well, ILM—or whoever we go to—will tell us whether we can do this or not.'"

One point the screenwriter emphasizes is that they are focused on making a very specific type of film, which is set to be released next summer.

"If there are any movies we keep looking to over and over again in relationship to this, it's *Star Wars* and *The Lion King*," Lemkin says. "They're very mythological films. We're trying desperately to make something that taps into deeper mythological stories, rather than just bad men come to town, cause trouble and we kick their ass. We want something with a little more resonance."

"Truthfully," he closes, "we're aiming high and hopefully we'll pull it off. If you're gonna aim high with somebody, it might as well be Superman." ♦



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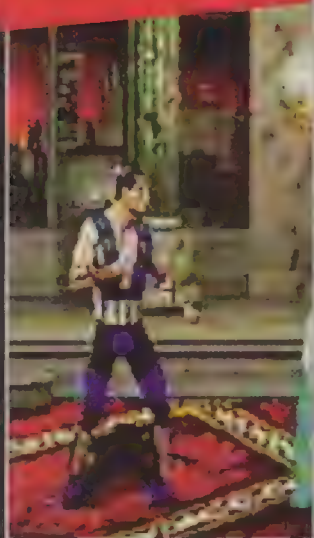
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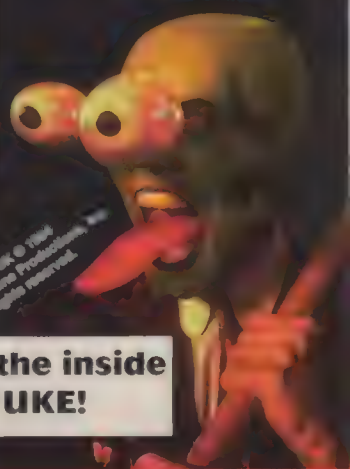


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SHOCK THERAPY

Fox's latest cult series, *VR.5*, plugs into the computer revolution, exploring its potential for enhancing—and destroying—the human experience

by Edward Gross

You're entering a dimension not of sight and sound, but of mind. Those words, uttered by Rod Serling more than 30 years ago, are as applicable to the Fox television series *VR.5* as they are to the late Serling's classic *The Twilight Zone*. Taking advantage of the hype and the great potential of computer technology, the new series is based on an exploration of its characters' subconscious through virtual reality. Often surreal, usually dark in nature, it offers ambitious storytelling. In the cookie-cutter-like world of network television, where execs always want to appeal to a broad, diverse audience, the show's creators seem comfortable that the far-out premise and ominous mood clearly are not for everybody.

"I think it is different than any other show, and that pleases me," says executive producer John Sacret Young, who was the creative force behind the highly acclaimed *China Beach*. "I am pleased

that it got made. I'm pleased—even if it's occasionally imperfect—that it's out there. Beyond that, doing what I do, I can only put it out there and let it go its own way. This is a remarkable and unique show. Is it just too unique, too ahead of its time, behind its time, a waste of its time or just too far out there? Well, I think that it's emotionally accessible, so if people give it a chance they're going to get hooked."

A lot of people already are, with Fox having aired nine out of 13 hours produced for the series (the remaining four will air in the fall season if the series is renewed). Though it is propelled by mystery and intrigue stories, the show is largely a character study. Its primary character is Sydney Bloom (Lori Singer), the daughter of Dr. Joseph Bloom (David McCallum), a pioneer in computers and virtual reality who died in a car accident along with Sydney's twin sister. These deaths plunged Sydney's mother, Nora

(*Deep Space Nine*'s Louise Fletcher) into severe depression and, finally, a coma. Sydney, who inherited her father's penchant for computers, figured out how to plunge into a state of virtual reality with any person she links to with her phone and computer modem. What follows is an exploration of their subconscious minds, an exploration that leads the characters to subtle but important psychological discoveries about themselves.

As supervising producer and co-creator Michael Katleman says, "Sydney Bloom creates the landscape. Let's say she wants to take this guy into a coliseum. She'll type the word coliseum on her computer and then she'll have to put in the benches and the people she wants in the stands. She creates it. Then she calls the person up and whatever they both bring in to the scene from their minds joins what she's already created.

"For instance, let's take a room of furniture," he continues. "If you were to visit





that room in real life, maybe you'd see 30 family photos or a TV or anything else that might be there. If you had visited that in reality and I was to bring you in to VR, only the things that stuck in your head would be in that room. Maybe it's the TV screen, so we'll take you through the TV screen. It's only the things that we both bring into it. You don't know if it's something you brought in or something I brought in, so it's where we meet in the middle. Once in there, to get out she has to touch a key, and she doesn't always know what that key is. It could be anything, but it's that key that breaks the connection. Those are our basic rules."

Somewhat obtuse stuff, even for the most imaginative wirehead. But it makes for intriguing stories. And, of course, the VR isn't the entire premise of the show. VR.5 also deals with the real world, usually with the efforts of the Committee, a secret organization with a hidden agenda that wants to exploit Sydney's abilities and discover exactly how she does what she does. Her connection to the Committee is the enigmatic Oliver Sampson (Anthony Head, the guy from those ubiquitous Taster's Choice commercials), who seems to alternate between being friend and foe.

The concept for VR.5 grew out of Katleman's desire to work with Young. Katleman and his partner, Adam Cherry, pitched a variety of ideas to the well-known producer, one of which had to do with virtual reality. The concept of VR is what piqued Young's interest.

"We were working on [various projects] when *Time* magazine published an article about cyberpunk and we got turned on to that idea," explains Katleman, who is also a director (*Quantum Leap*, *The X-Files*). "I've been really into computers and virtual reality. You can't open up the newspaper without coming across something about VR. This new world out there is so intrinsically intriguing, and we wanted to explore it. We also wanted to create a role that was a strong leading role for a woman."

The concept for the series changed drastically as more creative minds became involved in it. The "created by" credit for the show includes Katleman, Cherry, Thania St. John, Jeannine Renshaw and Geoffrey Hemwall.

"We'd throw ideas back and forth and argue, and there was a good strong year of that before we sold it to the network," says Katleman. "It got massaged a lot and went through a lot of changes. Everybody involved had a lot of input in it, which is why there are five creators. I can honestly

say that every one of those creators had large contributions to the project. I really think it was a group of people who wouldn't normally work together, but were kind of thrown together. That made for some interesting, volatile meetings. From it all came a very positive project.

"What I wanted to do," he adds, "is create a show that was very visual. A show that the directors could go in and have a really good time working on. A show where the story can go absolutely anywhere, where there are no boundaries. For me, that was really exciting, as opposed to doing a cop show or a lawyer show where you walk in and say, 'Okay, here's the situation,' and it's never going to change. On VR.5, you come in and do a little minifeature."

Young believes that there is a "cyber-noir" quality to the show that makes it different from and darker than other any other series on the air. "It's probably because we're dealing with the human mind, which is both dark and light," he says. "I have always found *film noir* to be fascinating. I wrote a movie called *Testament*, a small movie about a family after the bomb drops. Everybody said to me, 'Thank God, the issue is so important,' and I agreed with all of that. But inside I said, 'What a perfect family *noir* story, where you put them against such circumstances and see what happens.' And here we put Sydney against her mind.

"When you go into VR," he elaborates, "you find a way to almost tell the dream version or nightmare version of a scene you just played in reality. As a writer and storyteller, that's really interesting, conceptually, to think about. You can replay the scene and it can take a different twist, going south or north on you. When we began, we thought it was going to be about a technological breakthrough, but as we went on and got into 'cybernoir,' it suddenly became about these psychological possibilities of the mind, keying into dreams and nightmares. That, of course, keyed in to memory and the past, as well as the future. That makes it, to me, very absorbing. It isn't just the case of the week. Something else is going on. In looking for a series to do, I didn't want to do *China Beach* again. I didn't want to do a doctor, a lawyer or a cop show straight on. I was trying to think of what would be different and new, and along came VR.5."

Co-executive producer Thania St. John, who wrote the pilot, is the one who came up with much of Sydney's personality, wanting to create a lonely, shy woman who is unable to deal with other people.

"How would a person like that act if she could strip herself of all those inhibitions and allow herself to be the person she has truly been inside?" muses St. John. "Beyond technology, it just felt like a really interesting way to approach storytelling. In

CASTING CALL (Top to bottom): Lori Singer, Michael Easton, David McCallum, Louise Fletcher and Anthony Head

CYBERSTAR

Lori Singer is seduced by the dark side of television and technology

Through the course of VR 5's initial nine-episode run, audiences have witnessed a number of subtle changes in heroine Sydney Bloom, played by Lori Singer. At first a quiet, slightly withdrawn techno-nerd, her virtual-reality experiences have helped her become more confident, self-aware and forthright.

Lori Singer, whose feature film resume includes *Footloose*, *Short Cuts* and *Trouble in Mind*, was drawn to the premise and its unique potential for providing character growth.

"I liked the script [of the pilot]," she says. "It had a lot of dramatic possibilities; the idea of really trying to find out what is going on in somebody's head is fascinating. Sydney is trapped by her talent, but at the same time, her talent with computers holds the key to her past and to her future. I thought that was compelling."

Singer likes that the virtual-reality sequences of VR 5 let her character shrug off the constraints of society, so she can experience emotions and events without being self-conscious. "In a way," offers the actress, "when Sydney discovers this ability, it's a spectacular moment for her. To have her mind meld with somebody else's and have a virtual experience is just wild, compelling, scary and challenging—everything she ever dreamed of. Each episode is really Sydney's exploration of herself."

Singer is so enthusiastic about the show, in fact, that she is brimming with examples of the show's narrative power and her character's tortuous development. "In one episode ['Dr. Strangechild'], she finds out about this kid in VR and all these similarities between them," she says. "Sydney gives him back the childhood he never had, and at the same time she's uncovering bits and pieces of her own past and finding her own strengths. It offers fascinating self-exploration. And in 'Sisters' [an episode that has yet to air in the U.S.], Sydney finds a worker stealing from her company and takes her to virtual reality to set up a situation where she'll be caught and so [she'll] find out that what she's doing is wrong. But what Sydney finds out—and this is what's so great about the show—is that she is seduced a little by the idea of stealing. It's about someone exploring her own temptations. She knows it's wrong and she's against it, but when she steps into the subconscious, there's a tiny twinge of, 'Maybe this is kind of fun.'"

So is VR 5 itself, as it challenges its audience and its star on a number of levels of consciousness. —E.C.

a way, her VR experience is like psychoanalysis for her. She goes in there and she literally gets to play around in her own brain and find and take out things she doesn't even know are in there. She's unlocking a lot of secrets, so to speak, of what makes Sydney Sydney."

Young, meanwhile, looks to one of his earliest writing jobs in television, on the Joseph Wambaugh-created *Police Story*, for inspiration. "One of the story editors, Liam O'Brien, an Irish storyteller who had been a playwright and had grown up in New York surrounded by Dashiell Hammett and Lillian Hellman, said, 'The definition of this show is a cop working on a case and a case working on a cop.' In an odd way, that concept applies to Sydney as well. Sydney is working on her computer but what she finds in there is working on her. That potential can keep things changing and growing."

Young says it has been fascinating to see how the series has been slowly finding itself. "The discovery process of the show really began when we hired David McCallum and Louise Fletcher for one episode. We didn't know then how important those characters would be or that we were going to go that deeply into them, where they would continue to reappear in virtual reality," Young says. "The fourth episode was originally called '3A,' because when we were doing episode five or six, Thania St. John and I were talking about the



TOGETHERNESS:
Singer and Easton

show, and I suddenly said, 'Wait a minute, we missed one back there. Let's call it "3A," because it goes between three and four.' So we suddenly went back and carved a new one in between them. For us it was kind of like, 'Oh, I get it. I see where it's coming from and where it's going.' In that way it's a little bit like writing a novel, where at some point you plan and conceptualize but then you're on that diving board and you go off. Then you're in free fall and the characters kind of say, 'Okay, you think you're in charge? Well, look out.'"

So the writers are careful to pay atten-

tion to what they are diving into. As Katleman points out, "This show could easily fall into repetition if we get lazy. It has the ability to go anywhere, but it can only be as creative as we make it. We've gotten some great critical notices, but once you start believing you can't do wrong, you do. You have to constantly be pushing yourself to keep it fresh so it doesn't become boring."

Aware of the show's fervent, if still small, following, Katleman has his own theories of VR.5's effect on viewers. "The appeal is that VR is around the corner and everyone you talk to has a computer at home. Just 10 years ago people didn't have computers. Today, people are very involved with all of the on-line services. They're involved in virtual reality, even though the technology is just beginning. There are virtual-reality theme parks. I also think it's basic voyeurism. People love looking into other people's lives and going into a place where you can't be recognized. You can go in there and have safe sex. Will the person remember? Who knows? You can go in there and do anything you want."

But he points out that the show isn't designed to be a TV theme-park ride. "VR.5 and virtual reality itself also represent a basic human fear," he says. "Right now, people can go to on-line instant tellers. They watch MTV and do their shopping at home from the shopping network. Some are starting to see that by being plugged in they can end up being isolated. You don't have to leave your home anymore for anything. That is a potential danger that the future holds, and one that VR.5 manages to explore." ♦



STRANGE LAND: In VR.5, cyberspace is a magnet for offbeat characters

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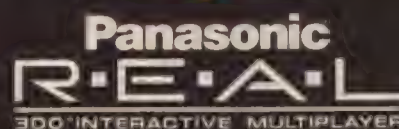
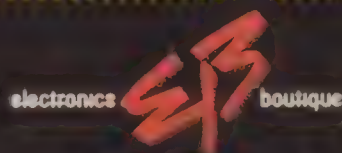
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STAR TREK

Marking Time

With the first season's "Where No One Has Gone Before," *The Next Generation* finally began to chart its own course

by EDWARD GROSS

It seems impossible now, but early on, there wasn't much faith in the staying power of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. During its first season, the show was generally dismissed as an inferior remake of the original series. "Encounter at Farpoint" was compared to "Squire of Gothos," "The Naked Now" to "The Naked Time" and much of "Code of Honor" to "Amok Time."

One early exception, however, was the highly imaginative "Where No One Has Gone Before," which managed to show what this new generation was capable of doing. In the episode, a Federation propulsion expert named Kosinski and his alien assistant, the Traveler, come aboard the Enterprise to enhance the starship's warp capabilities. Something goes horribly wrong, and after two warp accelerations, the Enterprise finds itself more than 350 million light-years from home. Returning to



their own galaxy at maximum warp would take over three centuries (and the Voyager thought it had problems).

Things go from bad to worse when, in this sector of space, reality breaks down and the crew begins to bring images from their subconscious to life, from Picard seeing his long-dead mother to Worf being reunited with his Klingon pet targ. The only way



back to their own galaxy and a recognizable version of reality is through the unexplained powers of the Traveler, who was actually the one responsible for this journey in the first place. Problem: He's dying.

Former co-executive producer Maurice Hurley recalls that he did a complete rewrite of the script for that show, which the entire staff hated. He did another



rewrite, however, and brought it closer to the episode that aired. "It's a show I like a lot," says Hurley. "Everything about that episode worked. That's when everybody started to hit their stride a little bit. The casting was good, the Traveler was wonderful, the optical effects were outstanding. You could actually feel things starting to come together."



FINAL FRONTIER: Kosinski and his alien assistant, Trip Tucker, warn the Enterprise more than 350 million light-years from home

Admits writer Michael Reaves, who is currently involved with Disney's *Gargoyles*, "Diane Duane and I really lucked out. It was our concept, but we were massively rewritten. I will agree that it was the best episode at that time. Yes, they had an all-powerful alien, but at least he wasn't a cranky child. One of the things we liked about the show as aired is that there was some honest emotion involved, although not nearly as much as we had. One thing that they did keep from our story is that this was a problem that was not solved by showing our superiority, which I kind of liked. Production-wise, it was wonderful, and the acting was all very good. We were lucky it came out as good as it did, because it was out of our hands."

Reaves notes that there had been some talk of this script serving as the pilot, because there was a need for something "out-reaching. Instead, it's just television. The ironic thing is that Gene Roddenberry liked stories where the *Enterprise* meets God. The upshot of our outline was that they end up in a monoblock, a building block of the universe; and in order to get back to their own space and time they have to unbalance the monoblock, causing it to explode and a new universe to begin. The irony is that when they're doing a little, low-budget science-fiction show, no one pays attention. But when they're pouring this kind of money into it, everyone feels he has to contribute, and the story gets diluted. That's what upsets me, because here was an opportunity that I feel was missed."

Director Rob Bowman, currently serving as a producer/director on *The X-Files*, had just begun his career around the time of this episode. Although Paramount was reluctant to use him, then co-executive producer Bob Justman pushed for him.

"The episode was big, but it seemed like a good christening," says Bowman. "I felt we should do everything we possibly could do to stretch the boundaries of the envelope. The fun thing was figuring out the look of the Traveler and his wardrobe, and casting Eric Menyuk, all the way down to what seemed to be the never-ending job

FATHER FIGURES: The Traveler (top and second from bottom) rivals Picard as Wesley's mentor while the *Enterprise* drifts



of deciding how to make that pig look like a Klingon targ, whatever that looks like.

"It was an early episode and the writers were really fresh," he adds. "It was a very enlightening script, the likes of which you don't very often see on television. I felt very fortunate that it was such a great script, but, personally, I was terrified because it was my first episode and I wanted to make a good impression. I worked on that show every day I had the script, which, including the shooting, was like 20 days for me. I used lots of storyboards, blocked the sets, walked around them for several weekends to get used to them, and thought out every possible angle." One complaint leveled against the director is that the visions in the episode occur in rapid succession, thus diluting their overall impact.

"I don't think spreading the fantasies out would have helped at all, because that's not what the plot itself was about," Bowman says. "I think you begin to follow form instead of content if you play them throughout the show, because we would have continued to have to explain them, and maybe as we learned more it would have become less interesting because there would be no element of surprise."

A true highlight of "Where No One Has Gone Before" was the creation of different galaxies.

"The effects in that episode were, at times, extremely frustrating and complex, so I didn't know what they were going to look like," Bowman admits. "It's tough to have people react to something that even I can't identify. A lot of effects are just vaguely discussed during shooting, and only finalized during post-production. So at times it was difficult."

Explains FX supervisor Rob Legato, "The script says the ship has reached the end of the universe, a concept that can't be described because it can't be understood. I sat there and screamed, 'It can't be understood, but I've got to shoot it in three weeks.'"

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Doing the *Twister*

Director Jan De Bont gets up to speed on America's cyclone zone for a new Michael Crichton thriller

Director Jan De Bont isn't sitting at home moaning about losing *Godzilla*. After abandoning TriStar Pictures' monster project last winter due to differences over the film's budget, the Dutch director segued into *Twister*, the big-budget tornado extravaganza from Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, which started filming last month.

De Bont's salary is quite a monster as well—the *Speed* director will be getting \$3 million up front, plus a percentage of the box-office take, the merchandising and even the film's soundtrack sales, making his potential payday one of the biggest directorial windfalls in movie history.

Bill Paxton (co-star of *Aliens* and one of the astronauts blasting off this summer in *Apollo 13*) and Helen Hunt (NBC's *Mad About You*) play husband-and-wife tornado scientists who track twisters in an effort to find ways to control them. Hunt was so intrigued by the female lead in the movie that she chose it over a meaty part alongside John Travolta and Christian Slater in *Broken Arrow*, the John Woo-directed actioner that also began filming recently.

Hunt and Paxton, along with fellow cast members Cary Elwes (*The Princess Bride*) and Jami Gertz (*The Lost Boys*), will spend the summer on location in Tornado Alley, a big swath of the twister-prone Middle



WITH A TWIST: *Apollo*'s Paxton takes a spin

America that includes Kansas, northern Texas and Oklahoma. Filming is expected to last at least three months, and the movie is being positioned as one of Warner Bros.' 1996 summer blockbusters.

Though Paxton and Hunt have solid reputations, neither is expected to carry the movie. That's up to the computer-generated Mother Nature. With special effects by Industrial Light and Magic, *Twister* promises to be cut from the same cloth as Spielberg's megahit *Jurassic Park*—no A-list (i.e., expensive) stars, but plenty of heart-pounding excitement



MAD ABOUT HELEN: Hunting up a role

from the FX.

The idea for *Twister* came from Anne-Marie Crichton, wife of the best-selling novelist Michael Crichton (*Disclosure*, *Jurassic Park*, *Congo*). The couple wrote the script together, and the rights were snapped up by not one but two studios for a cool \$2.5 million. In a highly unusual arrangement, Universal and Warner Bros. flipped a coin for worldwide distribution rights, with Warner getting the right to sell the picture in the States and Universal taking the flick international.

—Mo Ryan

ALIEN 4

THE PLAYERS: T.B.D.

THE PLOT: The fourth installment of the series is still in the planning and writing stages.

THE DIRECTOR: T.B.D.

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

ASSASSINS

THE PLAYERS: Sylvester Stallone.

Antonio Banderas, Julianne Moore

THE PLOT: An elder assassin is pursued by a younger rival who wants to be top killer.

THE DIRECTOR: Richard Donner

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: October 6

BROKEN ARROW

THE PLAYERS: John Travolta, Christian Slater

THE PLOT: Slater and Travolta play daring Stealth Bomber pilots who enter hostile territory in a secret bid to recover a lost nuclear weapon.

THE DIRECTOR: John Woo

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: December

CONTACT

THE PLAYERS: Jodie Foster

THE PLOT: Foster will play a scientist who picks up a momentous radio signal from Earth's intergalactic neighbors that provides the blueprints for an interstellar spaceship

THE DIRECTOR: George Miller

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

CRUSADE

THE PLAYERS: Arnold Schwarzenegger

THE PLOT: It looks like this \$100 million medieval epic will finally get made, with *Robocops*' Paul Verhoeven behind the camera

THE DIRECTOR: Paul Verhoeven

DISTRIBUTOR: T.B.D.

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

CUTTHROAT ISLAND

THE PLAYERS: Geena Davis, Mathew Modine

THE PLOT: Bumped from the summer slate, this \$75-million pirate epic looks to be in trouble

THE DIRECTOR: Renny Harlin

DISTRIBUTOR: MGM

RELEASE DATE: December



HEAT SEEKER: Al Pacino turns up the temperature

DAYLIGHT

THE PLAYERS: T.B.D.

THE PLOT: Stallone is likely to take the lead in this tunnel actioner about an emergency rescue worker trapped in a tunnel.

THE DIRECTOR: Rob Cohen

DISTRIBUTOR: Universal

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

DESPERADO

THE PLAYERS: Antonio Banderas, Joaquim De Almeida

THE PLOT: A bigger-budget sequel to the \$7,000 shoot-'em-up *El Mariachi*, this flick may get a name change before it hits theaters.

THE DIRECTOR: Robert Rodriguez

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia

RELEASE DATE: August 25

DRAGONHEART

THE PLAYERS: Dennis Quaid, Sean Connery (as the dragon's voice)

THE PLOT: In one of next summer's high-profile releases, a knight enlists the help of an old enemy, an 18-foot dragon generated by computer graphics.

THE DIRECTOR: Rob Cohen

DISTRIBUTOR: Universal

RELEASE DATE: Summer 1996

THE ERASER

THE PLAYERS: Arnold Schwarzenegger

THE PLOT: Ah-nold plays a border control cop at war with a renegade colleague.

THE DIRECTOR: Chuck Russell

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: Summer 1996

EXECUTIVE DECISION

THE PLAYERS: Kurt Russell

THE PLOT: In this all-stops-out action extravaganza, Russell (*Stargate*) plays an intelligence officer who tries to prevent a terrorist hijacking.

THE DIRECTOR: Stuart Baird

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: Spring 1996

FAIR GAME

THE PLAYERS: Cindy Crawford, William Baldwin

THE PLOT: Supermodel Cindy Crawford plays a lanky lawyer marked for death by a hit squad.

THE DIRECTOR: Andrew Sipes

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: August 11

GODZILLA

THE PLAYERS: A certain large lizard

THE PLOT: TriStar's \$100 million monster epic.

THE DIRECTOR: T.B.D.

DISTRIBUTOR: TriStar

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

GOLDENEYE

THE PLAYERS: Pierce Brosnan, Famke Janssen, Sean Bean, Joe Don Baker, Robbie Coltrane, Izabella Scorupco

THE PLOT: Bond goes up against the modern Russian mafia in Brosnan's Bond debut.

THE DIRECTOR: Martin Campbell

DISTRIBUTOR: MGM/UA

RELEASE DATE: November 17

HACKERS

THE PLAYERS: Lorraine Bracco, Jonny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie

THE PLOT: Young computer experts/pranksters somehow find themselves embroiled in a dangerous industrial espionage plot.

THE DIRECTOR: Iain Softley

DISTRIBUTOR: MGM/UA

RELEASE DATE: August 9

HEAT

THE PLAYERS: Val Kilmer, Robert De Niro, Al Pacino

THE PLOT: Kilmer loses his cape and joins De Niro's criminal crew; the director is the creator of the trendy 1980s series *Miami Vice*.

THE DIRECTOR: Michael Mann

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: December 15

THE CINESCAPEE

DAVID McCALLUM

Cold War the spy who came to from the Cold War. As often forlorn, the intrepid Soviet spy who found himself partnered with ordinary American agent Napoleon Solo (Robert Vaughn) in the offbeat espionage series *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* David McCallum received the best script treatment since a little-known U.S. production. The hit *Black & White* show "was a satire," says the Scottish actor. "It was a ton of fun, a cheeky response to Cold War paranoia."

A quarter of a century later, McCallum, 61, is immersed in matters of national security once again as virtual-reality pioneer Dr. Joseph Westin in *V.I.P.* (see story, page 16). The Los Angeles actor made his first recurring TV role *Melrose Place* last fall as Dr. Daniel Westin in *The Invisible Man*, which vanished in 1976 after 12 episodes. "It was conceived as a silly comedy," he recalls, "but I was under the impression that we were doing a drama about a man who wanted to become invisible."

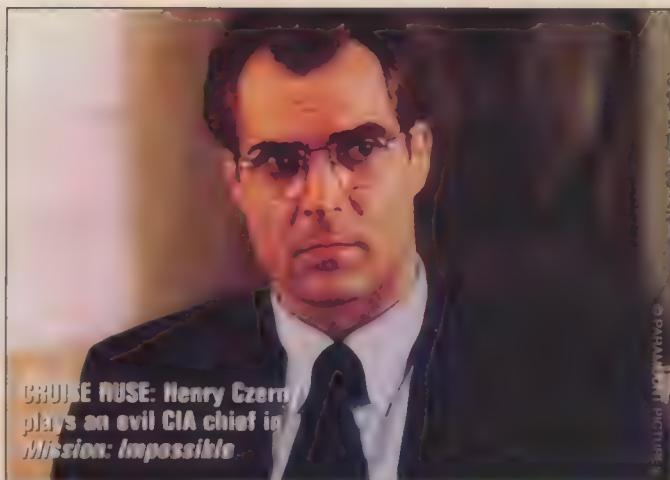
McCallum himself had few industry credits to advertise, working alongside some of Britain's biggest stars—including Sean Connery in the 1965 thriller *Hell Drivers* and Steve McQueen in the 1967 B&W drama *The Great Escape*. A chance meeting with TV producer American Action (*The Untouchables*) led to his casting in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* "I landed work," he says. "The idea was that I'd do it for a year and then go back into pictures." But over the next four years, like *Forrest Gump*, he became a star in his own right.

McCallum is freer and he expects that *Quantico* (see story) may give his old series a high-profile reviv. While filming *Natural Born Killers* (based on a story by Tarantino) an "obsession," the actor admires *Pulp Fiction* and thinks the hyperactive *John Woo* could be a good fit for U.N.C.L.E. "Clearly he has all the imagination necessary to produce something very intense and... it's dated, though. There's no Cold War now."

The Cold War may indeed be over, but McCallum remains a certain distance from what he's been known about as a popular. "If I knew that," he says bluntly, "I would be sitting home talking to you... Don't know."



DISTANT RELATIONS: Vaughn and McCallum as the men from U.N.C.L.E.



BRUISE RUSE: Henry Czerny plays an evil CIA chief in *Mission: Impossible*

INDIANA JONES 4

THE PLAYERS: Harrison Ford
THE PLOT: Indy's fourth outing is set to hit theaters 15 years after *Raiders of the Lost Ark* first thrilled moviegoers.
THE DIRECTOR: Steven Spielberg
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: 1996

THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD

THE PLAYERS: Litefoot, Lindsay Crouse, David Keith, Hal Scardino
THE PLOT: A boy's toys come to life in this special effects adventure.
THE DIRECTOR: Frank Oz
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: July 14

THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU

THE PLAYERS: Marlon Brando
THE PLOT: Brando plays the grisly scientist in the fourth film version of the H. G. Wells tale.
THE DIRECTOR: Richard Stanley
DISTRIBUTOR: New Line
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

JUMANJI

THE PLAYERS: Robin Williams, Bonnie Hunt, Kirsten Dunst
THE PLOT: Dunst releases William from a magical board game.
THE DIRECTOR: Joe Johnston
DISTRIBUTOR: TriStar
RELEASE DATE: November 17

LORD OF ILLUSIONS

THE PLAYERS: Scott Bakula, Pamke Janssen
THE PLOT: Barker's latest horror hoe-down will hit theaters this August.
THE DIRECTOR: Clive Barker
DISTRIBUTOR: MGM/UA
RELEASE DATE: August 18

MARY REILLY

THE PLAYERS: Julia Roberts
THE PLOT: Julia Roberts is the maid to both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.
THE DIRECTOR: Stephen Frears
DISTRIBUTOR: TriStar
RELEASE DATE: August 11

MEN IN BLACK

THE PLAYERS: Tommy Lee Jones
THE PLOT: Paranormal investigators track down alien visitors in this sci-fi actioner.
THE DIRECTOR: Barry Sonnenfeld
DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

THE PLAYERS: Tom Cruise, Jon Voight, Emmanuelle Beart, Ving Rhames, Henry Czerny, Emilio Estevez
THE PLOT: The 1960s TV show about a group of specialized government agents hits the big screen.
THE DIRECTOR: Brian De Palma
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: November 24

MONEY TRAIN

THE PLAYERS: Woody Harrelson, Wesley Snipes, Robert Blake
THE PLOT: Extensive spring rains in L.A. damaged this subway actioner's \$8 million train set, but production on the cop actioner is still rolling forward on time.
THE DIRECTOR: Joe Ruben
DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia
RELEASE DATE: November 10

MORTAL KOMBAT

THE PLAYERS: Christopher Lambert
THE PLOT: The gang from the video game finally hit theaters.
THE DIRECTOR: Paul Anderson
DISTRIBUTOR: New Line
RELEASE DATE: August 18

MULHOLLAND FALLS

THE PLAYERS: John Malkovich, Michael Madsen, Nick Nolte, Chazz Palminteri, Melanie Griffith
THE PLOT: The story of four hat-wearing Los Angeles detectives in the 1950s.
THE DIRECTOR: Lee Tamahori
DISTRIBUTOR: MGM
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

THE NET

THE PLAYERS: Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller
THE PLOT: An agoraphobic computer nerd is pursued by government assassins after stumbling onto online secrets.
THE DIRECTOR: Irwin Winkler
DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia
RELEASE DATE: September 15

NORTH STAR

THE PLAYERS: Christopher Lambert, James Caan
THE PLOT: In this turn-of-the-century, Alaskan adventure, Lambert plays an outdoorsman who tries to fend off a greedy miner (Caan).
THE DIRECTOR: Nils Gaup
DISTRIBUTOR: New Regency
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

THE PHANTOM

THE PLAYERS: Billy Zane
THE PLOT: From the syndicated comic, "the ghost that walks" comes to the big screen.
THE DIRECTOR: Joe Dante
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: November 11

THE QUEST

THE PLAYERS: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Roger Moore
THE PLOT: Van Damme makes his directing debut in this Asian-set action-adventure.
THE DIRECTOR: Jean-Claude Van Damme
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

THE ROYAL WAY

THE PLAYERS: Kiefer Sutherland, Richard Harris
THE PLOT: Sutherland gets involved in intrigue and tribal warfare in 1920s Southeast Asia. Based on a book by French writer Andre Malraux.
THE DIRECTOR: Andrei Konchalovsky
DISTRIBUTOR: Miramax
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

THE SAINT

THE PLAYERS: T.B.D.
THE PLOT: A remake of the classic television series about a crook who steals from the rich and gives to the poor.
THE DIRECTOR: Phillip Noyce
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: December

SANDBLAST

THE PLAYERS: Eddie Murphy
THE PLOT: Hoping to blast himself back into the forefront of action stars, Murphy has taken on this high-profile desert-set demolitions actioner.
THE DIRECTOR: T.B.D.
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

SEVEN

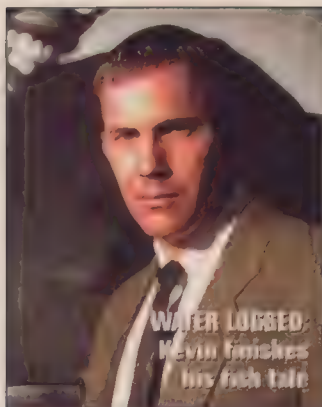
THE PLAYERS: Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman
THE PLOT: Pitt and Freeman play cops on the trail of a numerically minded serial killer.
THE DIRECTOR: David Fincher
DISTRIBUTOR: New Line
RELEASE DATE: September 29

A SIMPLE PLAN

THE PLAYERS: Nicholas Cage
THE PLOT: Two brothers find a crashed plane full of cash and try to elude the criminals who want it back; acclaimed retro film noir director Dahl will lens.
THE DIRECTOR: John Dahl
DISTRIBUTOR: Savoy
RELEASE DATE: December



MILLER TIME: Dennis Quaid caught in *The Net*



WATER LOUSED:
Kevin finishes
his fish tale

SPECIES

THE PLAYERS: Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Forest Whitaker
THE PLOT: A message from space gives scientists the DNA blueprints to create a horrific monster.
THE DIRECTOR: Ronald Donaldson
DISTRIBUTOR: MGM/UA
RELEASE DATE: July 7

STAR WARS (Episode 1)

THE PLAYERS: T.B.D.
THE PLOT: Prequels to George Lucas' classic trilogy should begin filming in 1997, 20 years after the first *Star Wars* debuted.
THE DIRECTOR: T.B.D.
DISTRIBUTOR: T.B.D.
RELEASE DATE: 1998

STRANGE DAYS

THE PLAYERS: Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Lewis, Angela Bassett
THE PLOT: Producer James Cameron parties like it's 1999 with this millennium-set supernatural thriller.
THE DIRECTOR: Kathryn Bigelow
DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox
RELEASE DATE: September

SUDDEN DEATH

THE PLAYERS: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Powers Boothe
THE PLOT: The Muscles from Brussels stars in an actioner set in a hockey rink.
THE DIRECTOR: Peter Hyams
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
RELEASE DATE: September 29

THE SUNCHASER

THE PLAYERS: Woody Harrelson
THE PLOT: Harrelson stars as a terminally ill hoodlum on the lam.
THE DIRECTOR: Michael Cimino
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

T. REX

THE PLAYERS: Whoopi Goldberg
THE PLOT: Goldberg plays a cop partnered with a human-sized T. Rex in this holiday action-comedy.
THE DIRECTOR: Jonathan Betuel
DISTRIBUTOR: New Line
RELEASE DATE: November 17

THE TWELVE MONKEYS

THE PLAYERS: Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt, Madeleine Stowe, David Morse, Christopher Plummer
THE PLOT: Willis travels back in time to save humanity, with only a series of haunting memories and some cryptic symbols as clues.
THE DIRECTOR: Terry Gilliam
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

UNDER SIEGE 2: Dark Territory

THE PLAYERS: Steven Seagal, Eric Bogosian
THE PLOT: Despite reports of on-set turmoil, Seagal's train-jacking sequel will arrive at theaters on time.
THE DIRECTOR: Geoff Murphy
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.
RELEASE DATE: July 14

UNFORGETTABLE

THE PLAYERS: Ray Liotta, Linda Fiorentino
THE PLOT: Liotta plays a man in search of his wife's killer who uses an experimental drug to experience the memories of those who may lead him to the murderer.
THE DIRECTOR: John Dahl
DISTRIBUTOR: MGM/UA
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN

THE PLAYERS: Eddie Murphy, Angela Bassett
THE PLOT: In a bid to give his career a box-office transfusion, Murphy sinks his fangs into the horror genre.
THE DIRECTOR: Wes Craven
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: October 27

VAMPIRES

THE PLAYERS: T.B.D.
THE PLOT: The Vatican assembles a hit squad to take out vampires accidentally unleashed by the church centuries ago.
THE DIRECTOR: Russell Mulcahy
DISTRIBUTOR: Largo Entertainment
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

VIRTUOSITY

THE PLAYERS: Denzel Washington, Russell Crowe, Kelly Lynch
THE PLOT: Washington and Lynch hunt an escaped cybercriminal through real and virtual L.A.
THE DIRECTOR: Brett Leonard
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: August 18

WATERWORLD

THE PLAYERS: Kevin Costner, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dennis Hopper, Tina Majorino
THE PLOT: Shooting this production mostly on water, as Costner and Co. did, means extensive post-production work, which could mean a fall release for this futuristic epic.
THE DIRECTOR: Kevin Reynolds
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
RELEASE DATE: July 28

WHITE SQUALL

THE PLAYERS: Jeff Bridges, Balthazar Getty, Caroline Goodall, John Savage
THE PLOT: Bridges leads a pack of kids on an adventurous Caribbean voyage.
THE DIRECTOR: Ridley Scott
DISTRIBUTOR: Buena Vista
RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

OUT ON BOND

How concerned are producers about the success of *Goldeneye*, in which Pierce Brosnan will make his debut as James Bond? "They're already working on the script for [my] second [Bond role]," Brosnan said during filming.

The highly touted movie was originally scheduled to be shot partly in Russia, but those plans got "botched up," the actor told *Daily Variety*. So St. Petersburg is being re-created on soundstages built inside a converted Rolls Royce factory in England. Set for a Thanksgiving release, *Goldeneye* is reminiscent of the old '60s Bond films in that Russians are once again the chief villains. This time, however, the Russian Mafia, not the KGB, don the black hats.

Brosnan, who reports he has "major insurance," has performed some of his own stunts, including a bungee jump. But he'll only do stunts that are "within reason." After all, the Irish actor says, "I have a family." ♦

PULLING STUNTS:
Brosnan as Bond

What's the Frankenstein, Kenneth?

Branagh's alternately fusty and feverish retelling of Mary Shelley's classic tale is a stitched-together bore

Inarguably, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Columbia TriStar) is possessed of a pedigree that most horror films would envy. With an A-list cast top-lined by Robert De Niro and British wunderkind Kenneth Branagh, who also directs, and a production team headed by Francis Ford Coppola, it seems to have everything going for it. The sad truth is, rarely has a movie been so much less than the sum of its ... well, parts. Audiences generally thought the \$45 million film reeked, too, but there may be an underlying reason why they avoided it—the uncomfortable similarity between the Creature and, no joking, Forrest Gump. Both are defective societal outcasts who yearn for acceptance. Like John Carpenter's *The Thing* was to *E.T.* in 1982, *Frankenstein* was to *Gump* in 1994: Folks just didn't want to think about, let alone see, the evil twin of the year's most popular character.

Aside from its disharmony with the current Zeitgeist, the

movie as a singular work of celluloid is accursed enough. It gets off on the wrong cadaverous foot immediately with a badly staged, slackly edited prologue in which an Arctic explorer (Aidan Quinn) runs his ship into an iceberg in 1794. Just as his crew threatens mutiny, an ominous roar sounds across the forbidding floe. Good Lord, what is it? A constipated polar bear? A Yeti with agita? A gibbering Victor Frankenstein (Branagh) promptly emerges from the frigid mist to explain.

Flashback to Geneva, 1773, where the young Frankenstein is introduced to his new "sister," an orphan named Elizabeth (later played in adulthood by Helena Bonham Carter). The inquisitive lad is shown burrowing into his books, maturing into a man with an aptitude for medicine and physics. That aptitude takes its first dark turn when Victor watches his mother die after an extremely messy childbirth—a foreshadowing of

messier deliveries to come.

Frankenstein's burgeoning hunger for scientific knowledge and his love for Elizabeth dovetail in a curious scene set during a family outing in the Swiss Alps. As a thunderstorm wafts in suddenly—with the help of a forklike lightning rod devised by Victor—the hills are alive with the sound of static electricity, replete with tiny bolts springing from Elizabeth's décolletage. It's a moment that would have given Ben Franklin chills. Maybe.



MISERY LOVES COMPANY:
Branagh and Bonham
Carter work the crowd

Without further ado, Frankenstein packs off to Ingolstadt, where his support of unpopular theories on the nature of life and death alienates all of his professors except Waldman (a pompous John Cleese), from whose journals he finally learns how to reanimate corpses. The climactic moment of creation makes the whole of Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* look like a model of restraint: Eyes blazing, hair flying, abs rippling, Branagh sheds his robe and whirls about his attic laboratory

clad only in black pajama pants; he's the Chippendale's interpretation of a scientist gone mad. As if this isn't enough, the electrical juice that jump-starts the Creature (De Niro) is derived from eels penned inside what resembles a massive, hemorrhoidal sphincter dangling from the rafters. The beast that emerges from all this Freudian—nay, *Flyntian*—imagery seems, fittingly, more a product of bloody stool than of flesh and blood. But does the audience really deserve to have Frankenstein's inflamed, extruded "birth canal" thrust in its face?

Equally gratuitous is the sequence of quick cuts immediately following, in which Victor grapples and slips with the Creature in a puddle of viscous amniotic fluid as he tries to help him stand. Realizing that this spastic foal is a major Frankenfolly, Victor recites as he writes in his journal: "Massive birth defects, greatly enhanced physical strength—but resulting reanimant is malfunctional and pitiful and dead." (Gaffe-wary viewers will note that the words "physical" and "pitiful" somehow have been replaced by "visible" and "vile" in the journal when the Creature reads it a few scenes later.) Unbeknownst to the self-absorbed Branagh, the inscription almost comes off as a self-reference.

When his DePalma-esque camera isn't spinning in a vain attempt to liven the action and exposition, Branagh's (not Mary Shelley's) *Frankenstein* practically molders before your eyes. Steph Lady and Frank Darabont's script, a vivid reading experience in its own right, is short on new twists to the oft-told tale and perhaps is too faithful to the source. But the real death knell sounds in Branagh's approach. In an overdramatized style more appropriate to the Gothic '60s soap opera *Dark Shadows* than to feature filmmaking on the cusp of the 21st century, the ram-bunctious 33-year-old coaxes gratingly unsubtle line readings from almost all of his performers, himself included. Carter, as

Victor's latent love interest, is a pouty, 18th-century mannequin; while Quinn, as Capt. Walton, is all wide-eyed bewilderment. De Niro's monster devolves into a weak riff on his manipulative psycho from *Cape Fear* as he wreaks revenge on the Frankenstein family, with a lot of latex sutures substituting for true menace; when he

gory Gumby during the post-creation sequence, which requires him to flop about in a stitched-up, full-body skin suit.)

The FX, fortunately, are not as stark—and therefore more bearable—on video. The confines of the TV screen actually temper some of the director's theatrical excesses, making the movie semiwatchable on a kind

of brainless telefilm level. The freedom of being able to hit the pause button for a revitalizing swig of Pepto Bismol also helps.

But Branagh's Victor is, severed hands down, a loser. If life is like a box of chocolates for that guy named Gump, it's gotta be a bowl of giblets for Frankenstein this time out.

★☆☆☆—Dean Lamanna



DARK SHADOWS:
Soap-opera horror hits
the big screen

cranks into emotive overdrive, he resembles a raging, road-pizza version of George C. Scott. The only memorably horrific moment is supplied by supporting player Trevyn McDowell, who, as Justine—the lovelorn daughter of the Frankensteins' housekeeper—is hanged by the townspeople when they (wrongly) accuse her of murdering Victor's wee brother, Willie.

Back on the visual side, other nagging questions arise: If there wasn't enough money to do convincing miniatures for the prologue and epilogue at the Arctic Circle, why bother with the segments at all? And why does Branagh linger on the details of Daniel Parker's gruesome Creature makeup, rendering it just plain gross rather than shockingly hideous? (For instance, De Niro looks like a



A KISS BEFORE DYING:
An unusual high point
in a doomed love affair

HE'S BACK

Wes Craven's latest *Nightmare* finds Freddy Krueger on his best behavior

If you're expecting Wes Craven's *New Nightmare* (New Line) to be just another *Elm Street* sequel, then you're in for a surprise. Rather than a Freddy rehash, it's more like a horror version of *The Player*.

All the principle players from the first *Nightmare* film (Robert Englund, Heather Langenkamp and John Saxon) are back, this time playing themselves. Director Wes Craven even steps in front of the camera to show his acting skills (he's not bad).

The story revolves around Langenkamp, a happily married woman living in Southern California with her husband and their young son. But all is not well in her little piece of paradise. The actress is suffering from strange nightmares apparently stemming from recurring earthquakes and a series of phone calls from someone doing a Freddy Krueger imitation. Her kid (Nick Corri) is also having nightmares. He claims a mean old man with sharp claws on one hand is hiding at the foot of his bed.

Starting with the familiar

template for all the *Nightmare* movies (nightmares that cross over into reality), Craven then heads off in new directions. It seems he wants to expose a horror far greater than Freddy: The invasive nature of Hollywood publicity and merchandising. In one amusing scene, Robert Englund pops up in his Freddy garb to surprise Langenkamp on a local talk show. The Freddy-obsessed audience—dressed in Freddy masks and sweaters—goes nuts. Langenkamp looks rather disturbed by all this.

The movie depends, of course, on Freddy to deliver both laughs and screams of terror. Craven has come up with a whole new angle on the character (which ends up not really being the character at all ... but it is). To explain it would ruin the movie for you.

While it has a good share of scares, this *Nightmare* sequel is really just for fun. We all know Freddy by now, so it's tough for him to really spook us anymore.

★★★★☆—Frank Kurtz



FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Freddy comes back in a new

The Professional

(Columbia TriStar)

With its dispassionately arty visual style and phalanx of vicious characters, *The Professional* opens like any of a handful of recent, inept bows to '40s film noir. But writer/director Luc Besson (*La Femme Nikita*) is just testing us. Instead of offering another studious homage, the filmmaker cleverly manipulates the conventions of the crime genre, and we soon

Joining Leon at the center of all this is Mathilda (Natalie Portman), a tiny, grimly cheerful, 12-year-old girl who's set adrift when her family is slaughtered by a rogue cop (a wonderfully camp Gary Oldman). With the arrival of this inexplicably self-possessed girl, Leon glimpses emotional daylight, and the two outsiders form a close, father-daughter bond.

But while our redeemed murderer can finally see beyond



discover that he's telling a strange, but moving love story.

Leon (Jean Reno) is a sensitive, misunderstood assassin, the kind of huggable, two-dimensional misfit who's supposed to show us how society's norms suffocate the human spirit.

Fortunately, Besson skips the usual commentary on the oppressiveness of modern life, putting in its place a fatalistic lark involving the mob and dirty cops in a slightly cockeyed version of New York City. Though the movie conveys superficial realism (garbage falls from tenement windows as rats hold court in the alleys below), its cityscape is really just a grimy cartoon where gruesome encounters swim in false time, crime bosses are kind and solicitous, and the cops are in desperate need of shock therapy.

his profession, the girl embraces revenge. Setting out to find the man who killed her family, she forces the normally careful Leon into a final, ill-advised showdown with the dark forces that represent the law.

Step by step, *The Professional* meets all the requirements of the typically dazzling and barren action epic (see *The Specialist*). But rather than defining itself through its body count, it turns on the issue of conscience. "No women, no children," is Leon's credo as a killer, which he suddenly finds insufficient. For years, he has been able to convince himself that his work isn't objectively wrong. Now, as he drifts away from his mafia brethren, he begins to see the wider moral world—and the view is too much for him to take. ★★★★★—Douglas Perry

Ed Wood

(Touchstone)

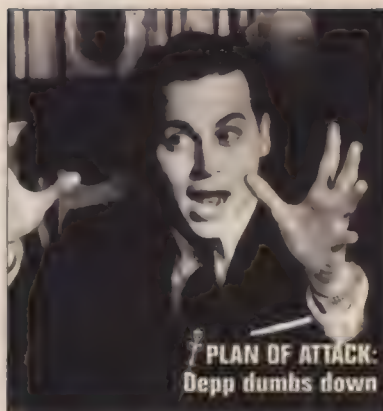
The movie begins with an ominous narration: "Can your hearts stand the shocking facts of the true story of Edward D. Wood, Jr.?"

Good question. Hollywood, a town that steamrolls innocent aspirations like so many dim, slow-moving squirrels, offers few stories more tragic than that of Ed Wood, a cross-dressing, untalented filmmaker who ended up broke and perpetually fogged by alcohol. Director Tim Burton's pseudo-epic biopic, though sympathetic, revels in this chirpy naïf's failings, which cruelly slapped and beat him—again and again and again—until he finally

died 17 years ago at the age of 54.

Inevitably downbeat, *Ed Wood* didn't sell many tickets last year, but it is quickly acquiring the kind of cult following that Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space* enjoys. The difference: Burton's film is extraordinarily good.

Former acting teacher Martin Landau (*Tucker*) received a well-deserved Oscar for showing us the painful disintegration of horror star Bela Lugosi, who finished up his career mocking himself in Wood's pics. And a Tiny Tim-like Johnny Depp (*Don Juan DeMarco*), in another unusual star turn, brings a



contagious enthusiasm to the title role, creating a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed obsessive who is ready to do whatever it takes to make a movie ... any movie.

Somewhat bizarre considering the filmic ineptness of its subject, this is a beautifully ren-

dered production in every respect. Cinematographer Stefan Czapsky finds the essence of Wood's world with his stark, black-and-white photography, and Howard Shore's bongo-beat score perfectly captures the sticky-palm cheesiness of Hollywood's underbelly, the only place Wood could ever feel at home.

In the end, we realize that Burton has made a movie less about a specific individual than about a philosophy of life. Despite constant failure, Ed Wood always remained an enthusiastic *doer*—and maybe, the film tells us, that's more important than the fact that he wasn't any good at what he did.

★★★★☆—Douglas Perry

BACK OF THE RACK

BEST LAID PLANS

Maybe you watched the Academy Awards and wondered, "What on Earth did Martin Landau and Rick Baker do to win those Oscars (for supporting actor and makeup, respectively)? Who is this Ed Wood and why would anybody make a movie about him?" One of the chief reasons *Ed Wood* made it into theaters last year is because a cult following has grown up around the filmmaker's incredibly inept (but very likable) movie called *Plan 9 From Outer Space*.

For those of you who have seen the movie and actually asked the question, "What was it really like making that movie?", the folks at Atomic Pictures (Mark Patrick Carducci, Lee Harris and Robert J. Avrech) have provided an authoritative answer with their irreverent documentary, *Flying Saucers Over Hollywood: The Plan 9 Companion* (MPI Home Video).

Drawing on Rudolph Grey's Ed Wood biography, *Nightmare of Ecstasy*, *The Plan 9 Companion* ushers us through the strange life of Ed Wood as seen by those who knew him. Along the way, we are shown the places where Wood lived, worked, dreamed and, of

course, failed. Aiding in our understanding of the man is footage of Ed exuberantly directing a film, a home-movie moment that must have inspired Johnny Depp's performance in Tim Burton's biopic.

Though it's about one of the worst filmmakers in Hollywood history, this is no slapdash production. The makers of the *Companion* actually found the soundstage where most of the film was shot and many exterior locations, like Tor Johnson's house, where Lugosi walked off "never to return again." You'll feel like you're walking in the shoes (if not wearing the angora sweaters) of this inspired madman.

There is a ton of other information as well. We learn all about the Tor Johnson mask produced by Don Post Studios; the funeral of Bela Lugosi and the true story of the flying saucers over Hollywood. (They weren't paper plates or pie pans.) Also along for the ride are diehard fans like director Sam Raimi (*The Quick and the Dead*) and artist Drew Friedman (who drew the video's box art).

Ultimately, the whole production



enhances the legend of Ed Wood by showing his goofy, crazy side while never losing sight of the alternately sad and inspiring tale of a likable oaf who desperately wanted to be a Hollywood big shot and, despite repeated failure, just wouldn't give up.

Ed-heads: ★★★★★

Everybody else: ★★★

—Frank Kurtz

Sliding Through Time

Fox's new show writes its own history—but can it pen ratings success?

If HBO's *Fatherland*, set in a postwar world in which the Nazis are the victors, whetted your appetite for "what if" stories, then the Fox network has a show to satisfy your craving. *Sliders*, which aired eight shows starting in March, offers TV viewers an entertaining array of parallel worlds—alternate realities ranging from a modern age in which the atom bomb never exploded to one in which America is still a British colony.

"That's the great thing about this show," says Sabrina Lloyd, whose character, Wade Wells, is the girlfriend of the physics graduate student Quinn Mallory (played by Jerry O'Connell) who discovers a way to "slide" between alternate versions of present-day Earth. "The potential is there for the stories to be never ending."

Of course there's a catch to all this—the sliders can't get back to their own version of reality. So there's more than a bit of adjustment that occurs for the four sliders—Mallory, Wells, Mallory's physics professor Maximillian Arturo and blues singer Rembrandt "Crying Man" Brown, who just happens to be passing by when the others take off for present-day worlds unknown.

"I think naturally there's a bond between the young girl and the young lad," opines Welsh actor John Rhys-Davies, who plays Professor Arturo. "[Arturo] is more of a father figure to the young people," says



TIME BANDITS: Jerry O'Connell (right) takes castmates (from left) Cleavant Derricks, Sabrina Lloyd and John Rhys-Davies for a slide

Rhys-Davies, who's probably best known for his roles in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. The somewhat stuffy but practical professor can be a "figure of fun," Rhys-Davies says. "He has his foibles. When he finds himself in undignified situations, it can be a bit of a laugh." But to the more headstrong young characters, the scientist acts as a voice of reason. "He has a belief in rationality and thinking his way out of situations," Rhys-Davies says.

Wade Wells, on the other hand, discovered a streak of almost heedless independence in the show's premiere, according to Sabrina Lloyd. "She's desperate to have some excitement in her life," the actress says of her character. When they stumble upon the sliding technology, "[Wade] is the one who says, 'Let's go.' She's really out for adventure."

Doing the series was also an adventure for the 24-year-old Lloyd, who'd never done a weekly show before. "I learned so much from the other actors," she says. "They're all veteran actors. Jerry [Stand by Me] O'Connell is only 21, but he's been acting for 10 years. I really respect their opinions, and it was the kind of group where we were always there for each other."

For Rhys-Davies, who, like the rest of the cast, is awaiting word on whether the show will be renewed, the best part of *Sliders* is exploring the various social issues in each alternate reality, but in the adventurous style that the actor displayed in the two Indiana Jones films in which he appeared.

"In one episode of the show, we went to an alternate world where America lost the War of Independence and was still a British colony," he says. "There's a rebellion and the Prince of Wales is about to be assassinated by the Sheriff of San Francisco," who just happens to be a gun-slugging alternate version of Professor Arturo. But the four adventurers somehow manage to smooth things

over and institute some changes that reflect the world they left behind. "We leave them with the basis for the Bill of Rights and also help them to bring in some other reforms," Rhys-Davies says.

The endless story possibilities for *Sliders* make the show fun to shoot, says the 51-year-old actor, despite the long hours of filming in the often-rainy Canadian city of Vancouver. In Rhys-Davies' opinion, the future of the fledgling show, which garnered strong ratings for its premiere, depends on the writing: "Particularly with science fiction, a show depends on the quality of the imagination and the writing." If the quality of the show's scripts keep up with the possibilities of the writers' imaginations, he says, "*Sliders* could be quite a remarkable show, because you can go anywhere with it."

—Mo Ryan



JUST DO IT: Wade Wells (played by Sabrina Lloyd, center) urges Quinn to let them slide



JERRY DUTY: John Rhys-Davies says his *Sliders* co-star Jerry O'Connell is "very gifted—he's going to have an amazing career."

TUNED IN by andy mangels

Welcome back to the best source for news on your favorite science-fiction and action TV shows. Here's what's coming up on the networks and in syndication.

ABC

Flying in on *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures Of Superman*, Superman gets sued by someone he saved from a violent death and ends up in court in "Whine, Whine, Whine" (April 23). The finale for the second season of *Lois & Clark* will be "And The Answer Is" (May 14). In that show, a greedy crook named Jace discovers Superman's secret identity and holds Ma and Pa Kent hostage in return for super-favors. What's the cliffhanger? Well, you knew there'd be one. Well, Clark finally proposes to Lois. Will the series return? ABC sources say it's almost a done deal.

CBS

This fall, CBS will seem like a barren landscape to genre fans. The only projects in development are *Tomorrow Man*, featuring an android from the future; Francis Ford Coppola's new version of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*; and a miniseries of Dean R. Koontz's *Dark Rivers of the Heart*.

NBC

This month on *Earth 2*, Bess and Danziger get their brains fried by the pollen from a mysterious flower in "Flower Child" (May 14). Next, the season finale ends on a down note when they learn they're all dying from a deadly virus in "All About Eve" (May 21). Will the cast survive to face a second season? It's too early to tell.

Two more episodes of *seaQuest DSV* may round out the series. Will NBC commit to the show for a third season?

Given the cliffhanger ending, fans had better hope so. The web looks like it will give the nod, perhaps moving the series to Wednesday nights. Coming up before the finale, *Piccolo* is taken hostage by an unfriendly government and has a run-in with a super-powered creature called The Scarab in "Blindsided" (May 14). Then in the final episode, "Splash-down" (May 21), the *seaQuest* is snatched up by an alien mothership and taken to a flooded planet on which a great war is being fought. Nice-guy comic fan and *Star Wars* star Mark Hamill guests, as does ex-*Adam-12* and *Battlestar Galactica* star Kent McCord.

FOX

The nine-episode first season of *Sliders* closes in May with the return of Elvis in "The King Is Back" (May 10), followed by

"Luck of the Draw" (May 17). No news yet on whether *Sliders* will make the fall schedule.

Fox seems pleased with *VR-5*, but its ratings severely fluctuate. While the baby web has ordered 13 episodes, five have yet to be given an air date—but Fox has announced a cliffhanging season finale for May 12. No one seems to know what's happening to the final three episodes, "Sisters," "Send Me An Angel" and "Reunion." What we do know is that



HIGHLANDER FLING:
Adrian Paul stars as
Duncan MacLeod

Markie Post guest-stars as a woman with all the answers in "The Many Faces Of Alex" (May 5), while Sydney goes into VR8 and learns the truth about her family in the cliffhanger wrap-up (May 12).

SYNDICATED AND CABLE

This month on UPN's *Star Trek: Voyager*, Neelix is suffering from a fatal disease tied to the secrets of his past in "Getrel" (May 15); then it seems the Maquis are responsible for the ship suddenly losing power in "Learning Curve" (May 22).

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine is headed toward its season finale. Kira faces down an old ally at the request of new First Minister Kai Winn (Louise Fletcher) in "Shakaar" (May 22). This is followed by

they find the restless ghosts of dead space explorers. In "The Conversion" (June 9), a half-crazy ex-con finds a man who can heal him from his wounds and take away the pain of his past ... for a price. Rebecca DeMornay not only guest-stars, but makes her directing debut as well! Coming up in the future, Leonard Nimoy in Isaac Asimov's "I. Robot."

Highlander finishes its third season with a bang. MacLeod helps recover a valuable da Vinci sketch from an Immortal thief in "Personable Doubt" (week of May 15). Kalas returns in "Finale: Part One" (May 22) and kidnaps Amanda as bait to kill MacLeod. What's worse, the widow of a Watcher killed by Kalas decides to expose the secrets of the Immortals and the Watchers to the media. It



reruns of the two-part "Past Tense" (May 29 and June 5). A Dax episode, "Facets" (June 12) leads up to the season finale "The Adversary" (June 19), focusing on a shape-shifting saboteur.

On Showtime's hot new *Outer Limits* series, a world-weary priest begins seeing demonic apparitions in "Corner of the Eye" (May 19). That is followed by "Under the Bed" (May 26), in which Timothy Busfield plays a psychologist who investigates a little girl's disappearance. June's episodes include "Dark Matters" (June 2), in which three astronauts are plunged into a universe of total darkness where

all wraps up in "Finale: Part Two" (May 29), as the Immortals and Watchers face the end of the world as they know it. Either MacLeod gives his head to Kalas, or the media gets the news. A climactic fight-to-the-death finale has MacLeod and Kalas facing off in a sword fight on the Eiffel Tower. This wasn't a backlot set, but the real Eiffel Tower! *Highlander* has also been renewed for its fourth season, but expect some big changes.

Forever Knight finally returns from the rerun grave with new episodes this month. A series of deaths from bad prosthetic devices inspires an investigation in "The Code"



(May 13/14); and Nick Knight faces delirium and guilt in a fantasy world called "Curiouser & Curiouser" (May 20/21).

USA's one-hour *TekWar* series will air all reruns through May, but new episodes start with "Deep Cover" (June 10), in which Sam Houston goes undercover with a "mind-sculpted" second personality and gets trapped as Sabrina. More new ones coming up, starting with "Cyber Hunt" (June 17).

In May, the always fun Sci-Fi Channel hosts *Anime 95*, a week-long presentation of five all-new, cutting-edge Japanese animation flicks. Look for *Demon City Shinjuku* (May 15), *Lily C.A.T.* (May 16), the eco-themed *Casshan: Robot Hunter* (May 17), the super-heroic *8-Man After* (May 18), and the awkwardly titled, but entertaining *Project A-ko Battles Grev Side and Blue Side* (May 19). All the films have been dubbed in English. ♦

Premier Japanese Animation

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Memory Overload

Johnny Mnemonic "uploads" an interactive experience

Every now and then, a computer game defines its genre. *Tetris*, for example, defined puzzle games and *Doom* essentially created the first-person-perspective action game. Next up are "interactive movies," which are generally linear game adventures featuring non-interactive, full-motion video sequences. So far, though, the genre's marketing boom has been followed by a critical bust. No one game has really defined and launched the genre. But with *Johnny Mnemonic* (Sony Imagesoft) that may soon change.

Like the movie starring Keanu Reeves, *Johnny Mnemonic* is based on a William Gibson short story that follows the travails of a data courier who must download confidential information held in his brain implant within 12 hours or he'll die. He has lost his download code and, naturally, there is a group that wants to prevent him from divulging the information.

The plot, while unique in many respects, is not too far out of the mainstream when it comes to the standard computer adventure game or interactive movie. The majority of these titles have the player trying to accomplish a particular goal or linear series of goals. Along the way, the player needs to overcome obstacles and solve puzzles in the traditional sense. Additionally, the player must interact with other characters in the game and learn the proper use of items

that are discovered during the odyssey. So, in its basic format, *Johnny Mnemonic* is similar to most interactive adventure movies. Where it differs is in the execution.

Johnny Mnemonic, unlike most adventure games and interactive movies, doesn't have an "interface." The movie simply plays on the full screen. When the player has an opportunity to take action, either by moving around or by using an object,

the screen switches to a letter-box format. For realism, *Johnny* used live actors on real sets. And while cyberspace is depicted by having green- and bluescreened actors superimposed on computer-generated backgrounds, the majority of the game offers realistic settings. In short, you have something that looks much like a Hollywood production and is also interactive.

The crew that put together the computer game had unique

access to the feature film production. Producer Connie Booth and product marketing manager David Bamberger, as well as the game's writers, Douglas Gayeton and John Zuur Platten, were able to go through the movie script at a very early stage in the game's design. The crew was also given permission to use the multimillion dollar Heaven Node set, something that would have been beyond the budget of the com-



STAR SEARCH: He's no Keanu Reeves, but the gaming Johnny knows how to play

puter game to create.

But while the game stays true to the plot of the movie, it is also substantially different in important ways. Creating a game that exactly mirrored the movie's plot would provide little or no challenge to the gamer—see the movie, win the game. In

room around in. But to actually win the game, I think that you'll find it to be quite challenging. We're hoping that will satisfy the hard-core gamer."

One of the things that should please all gamers is that *Johnny Mnemonic* is a non-linear adventure. The first puz-



fact, Booth estimates that the game will take an experienced computer gamer upward of 30 hours to get all the way through the first time.

It is the use of film that has created the most challenging part of creating the game—piecing it all together. The goal was to create a game that flows as seamlessly as a movie: The player experiences no breaks in the action. With around 65,000 frames packed into 2,500 different scenes, the game still jumps flawlessly from scene to scene.

Johnny Mnemonic was not produced with hard-core computer gamers in mind, though it will certainly appeal to them. Instead, it is designed to appeal to an emerging segment of the gaming market—people who bought their computers for business and personal applications rather than for sheer entertainment. As Bamberger says, these users are finding that "it's hard to ignore the game section when you walk into CompUSA."

"Our credo to some extent was, 'easy to learn, difficult to master,'" Booth says. "We did want this to be an intuitive, interfaceless environment that anybody could start up and

zle, for instance, involves escaping from Johnny's apartment. There are four possible exits, and a total of 14 different paths out of the apartment. Additionally, there are random elements scattered through each new game. A window locked in a previous game may now be unlocked, for example. *Johnny* is attempting to create a cinematic feel while also providing a true game experience. Thus, cinematic "language" is used throughout the game. For example, close-ups are used to indicate that something is important. Rather than overlaying computer graphics to indicate that something is happening, music is used as the cue.

Most appealing, perhaps, is that playing the game is essentially like editing a personal version of a *Johnny Mnemonic* movie. To reflect this, a player can go through the game and then replay the actions taken, simply sitting back and watching the game unfold like a movie.

It may be too early to tell, but it is possible that in years to come, we will be looking back on Sony's *Johnny Mnemonic* as the true birth of the interactive movie. —Steve Honeywell

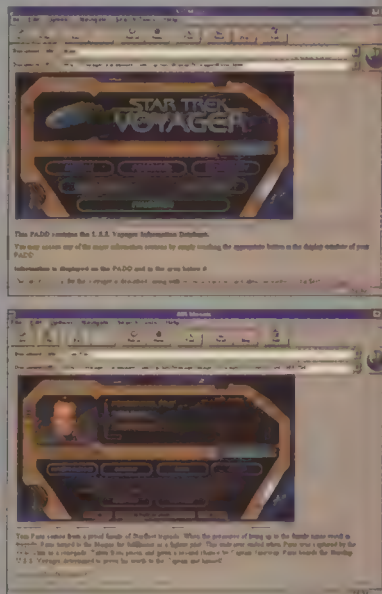
TREK SURFING

Visitors to *Star Trek: Voyager's* World Wide Web site (<http://voyager.paramount.com>) may get a lot more than they expected—such as an examination by a doctor.

Voyager's interactive trip begins with the ship's holographic Doc Zimmerman greeting visitors and telling them that the nasty knock on the noggin they received when the ship was flung across the universe has left them unclear about *Voyager's* crew and mission. He then directs patients—er, visitors—to to learn all they can about the ship so they can be restored to active duty.

Following his prescription, browsers can page through more than 100 different screens loaded with info, including nuggets from *Voyager's* "bible" that can't be found anywhere else. Visitors can even view scenes shot on the *Voyager* set specifically for the web site, which won't be seen on the show.

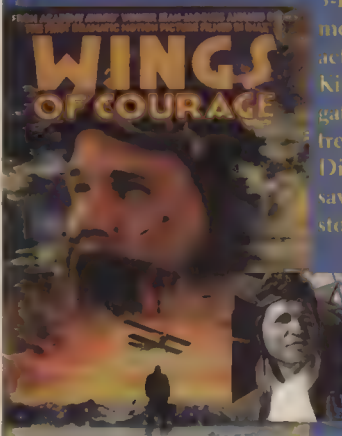
Voyager's producers occasionally cruise the web site to read viewer suggestions, so in the ultimate testament to interactivity, browsers could conceivably see their ideas show up in outer space.



IMAX HEADROOM

If you think of IMAX movies as nothing more than *Wild Kingdom* episodes on steroids, *Wings of Courage* may change your mind about the large-screen movie format.

Wings, which opened at Sony's New York City IMAX theater in April and is moving across the country, is the first-ever dramatic movie filmed for the special, you-are-there format—and it's not just any old IMAX experience. Innovative, 3-D stereo headsets allow moviegoers to feel like they're actually inside the action as Val Kilmer and Craig Sheffer navigate their prop planes over treacherous mountain passes. Director Jean-Jacques Annaud says he chose *Wings*, a true story by Antoine de St. Exupéry about mail pilots, because "it united several elements associated with the pleasures of IMAX—wide open spaces, aerial shots and a true story."



Hearing Voices

The first Babylon 5 novel finds an unlikely hero

Sarah Connor, Ellen Ripley and ... Talia Winters? That last name may not be as familiar as the first two, but the normally demure Ms. Winters, known to viewers of *Babylon 5* as the icy Psi Corps rep, works mightily to earn a place among these formidable futuristic action heroines in *Voices* (Dell, \$5.50), the first novel based on the popular sci-fi series.

Breaking out of the confines of the budget-conscious, mostly set-bound TV show, author John Vornholt takes the characters off the Babylon 5 space station. As the novel begins, representatives of the forbidding Psi Corps—a caste of powerful telepaths—are heading for the arid Mars colony for a conference. But as the dastardly Mr. Bester and his hapless assistant, Harriman Gray, watch from a transport, Mars terrorists blow up the hotel designated as the conference site, forcing the psychic friends to look elsewhere for a gathering place.

That done, Vornholt takes us to the B-5 space station for a brief tour. It's no secret to viewers of the show that the frosty first officer, Susan Ivanova, and the rakish security chief, Michael Garibaldi, have no love for the secretive and influential Psi Corps. But they're ordered by Capt. Sheridan to make the hastily arranged conference a success. Resident commercial telepath Talia Winters, unlike her fellow B-5ers, is thrilled by the prospect of hobnobbing with powerful head cases, but it doesn't turn out how she'd like.

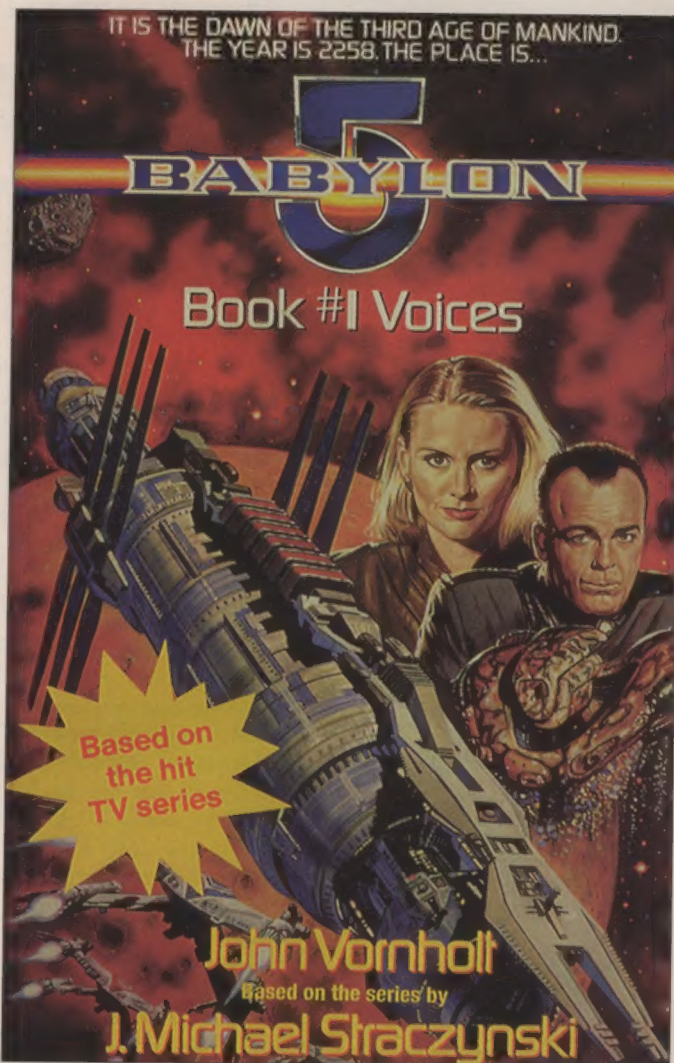
Before the conference can even properly begin, another terrorist bomb explodes, killing several junketeers. Curiously, Winters is neatly framed as the responsible party and tossed in the hoosegow. Despairing of get-

ting a fair hearing on Babylon 5, where everyone is suddenly convinced that she's part of the Mars separatist movement, the crafty Winters escapes from her cell on B-5 and skips off to Earth to clear her name.

With a smitten Garibaldi hot on her trail, Winters goes underground on the Blue Planet with a tribe of retro-hippies who mimic the lifestyle of the Native American tribes that roamed North America 500 years previously. Here, the book stumbles a bit on *Dances With Wolves*-style Indian worship, giving more information about a dippy, monosyllabic character named Lizard than is really necessary to give the story color. More endearing, however, is a subplot about Gray, Bester's bumbling assistant and a believably nerdy psychic who nurtures an unrealistic crush on Ivanova, possibly the last person in the galaxy who would give a Psi a try.

Finally, a not-quite-believable chain of events brings the main characters together for a final showdown on Mars, where the resolution that had been telegraphed from the halfway point of the book turns out to be pretty satisfying.

—Freida Noone





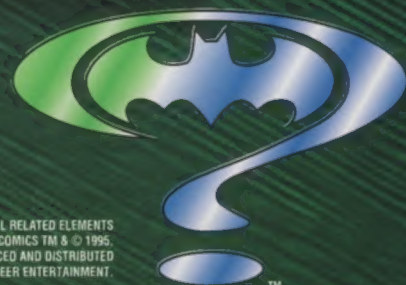
BATMANTM FOREVER



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together?' It's push me, pull you for a while."

Chris O'Donnell, who beat out a short list of Dick Grayson candidates that reportedly included Leonardo DiCaprio (*What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *The Quick and the Dead*), feels that the dynamic of the Batman and Robin relationship changed significantly when he and Kilmer came aboard. "It was suddenly more big brother-little brother," says O'Donnell, 25, who watched the TV series in reruns as a youth. "Originally, Robin was written younger—it was almost like a father-son type of film."

The actor, reluctant either to delve too deeply into their psychology or reveal more of the plot, hesitates when asked if the characters are partners in alienation. "Let's put it this way," he says. "Robin doesn't like Batman at the beginning, and they're standing together at the end—defending the city."

The key visual cue for their bond in the concluding moments of *Batman Forever* is Robin's new uniform. "It's a black, rubberized suit sculpted to look similar to Batman's," says Bob Kane. "It's not like my red-and-green costume with the yellow cape. I guess he's more menacing now. He's really like a junior Batman."

"If you have a secret identity, you can't go to a tailor to have those suits made," reasons Schumacher. "So I thought, 'If the person who made the Batsuit is making the Robin suit, wouldn't they make it similar?'"

Regardless, the suit suited O'Donnell just fine—as did the role in general. Although some of Dick Grayson's acrobatics and fisticuffs were handled by former multi-medal-winning Olympic gymnast Mitch Gaylord (*American Anthem*) under the guidance of stunt coordinator Conrad Palmisano (*Under Siege*, *The Cowboy Way*), a production source says O'Donnell did "a lot of his own stunts ... at least those he could get away with before the insurance people came in and said, 'No way.'"

"Chris worked very hard at it," says Schumacher. "The integrity and honesty that he has are God-given."

O'Donnell, who played D'Artagnan in 1993's *The Three Musketeers*, shrugs off the effort. "I'm good at faking it on camera," he says. "This Robin is a pretty tough guy. He tracks Harvey/Two-Face down and has a big battle scene with him. It's not every day you get to beat the crap out of Tommy Lee Jones. It's great. I love making movies."

BAT COMPANY

To be sure, there's nothing like bashing an inspired villain. And *Batman Forever* has a pair of them in Two-Face and the Riddler—played, no less, by two of today's top box-office draws: Tommy Lee Jones and Jim Carrey, respectively.

Schumacher, who wanted new baddies

and never suggested resurrecting Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman (seen alive in the final frame of *Batman Returns*), is bullish on this Dastardly Duo. "One of the thrills of *Batman* is the outrageousness of the villains," he says. "Imagine how great it is every morning to get up and go to work with Tommy Lee Jones playing Harvey/Two-Face and Jim Carrey playing the Riddler. You don't direct them—you just get out of the way."

Akiva Goldsman, who insists that the actors' spirited improvising caused no frantic rewrites, adds: "I was on set day after day, and when an idea came up, we'd just do it. Everyone—including Val, Nicole and Chris—had a very good instinct. When the script is sound, it gives you an opportunity to move around a little bit within the lines. And we had a great time doing that."

Having previously directed a more staid Jones in *The Client*, Schumacher relished the idea of exposing the 48-year-old actor's wild side like never before in *Batman's* ultimate dual role. Jones' decision to play Two-

The trouble with taking him from a comic book into a movie is that he's a very tortured soul who lives in the shadows: Even though he has two faces, the character can be very one-note. So we chose to make him less the Phantom of the Opera and give him a more theatrical flair; he's quite a clothes horse on one half of his body. And he has a girlfriend for each side—Sugar and Spice [Drew Barrymore and Debi Mazar]. Tommy has done a very personalized version of Harvey/Two-Face, and I couldn't see anybody [else] in the role."

When reminded that audiences did see someone else in the role—Billy Dee Williams played the pre-deformed Gotham City D.A. Harvey Dent six years ago in *Batman*—the director, as when commenting on Keaton, turns painstakingly diplomatic. "I am a great Billy Dee Williams fan," he says, "and I see Billy Dee Williams as a real leading man. I don't see him as the most evil, psychotic killer in Gotham City. I mean, he's a wonderful actor; I'm sure he could



SUIT YOURSELF: Chris O'Donnell (Robin) ponders the pre-latex look for sidekicks

Face, according to the director, apparently had more to do with the actor's 12-year-old son, Austin, than anything else. "When I went to meet with Tommy to do my spiel to get him to do the role, I got there and Austin had a pile of Batman comics with Two-Face on top. Tommy told me he's doing the character because it's Austin's favorite."

With Jones signed, the director was halfway toward his goal of a funnier film. "We've tried to add a lot of humor to *Batman*," he says. "They are called 'comic' books, so I encouraged Tommy's natural outrageousness. Instead of Harvey/Two-Face just being conservative on one side and insane on the other, he's now conservative on one side and outrageously insane on the other.

play it. But because he had never played Harvey/Two-Face really—he played Harvey Dent—I decided to go with Tommy."

Schumacher's decision to go with 33-year-old Jim Carrey as the Riddler, just before he hit the box-office stratosphere in *The Mask* and *Dumb and Dumber*, certainly was a smart one. The putty-faced Toronto native, who turned down \$18 million to star in a fantasy film called *The Thief of Santa Monica* last winter, will earn a mere \$5 million for the key supporting role—which, rumor had it, Robin Williams nixed because it was less comedic and more intellectual than the character played by the TV series' Frank Gorshin.

"There have been a lot of rumors that